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Volume 18 Number 5489

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, DECEMBER 16-17, 1993, RAGAB 3-4, 1414

Price: 150 Fils

Self-rule can go ahead on time, Rabin says

OCCUPIED GAZA STRIP (Agencies) — Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin toned down his warnings that autonomy would not be implemented on time saying here Wednesday the army could complete a pullout by April 13.

"I am not saying that there is a need for four months for the implementation as it was planned if in the coming 10 days or three weeks we reach an agreement," Mr. Rabin said at an army base in Rafah.

"I believe that we can meet the target date for both reaching an agreement and implementation of phase number one, Gaza-Jericho first."

After missing Monday's deadline to start the pullout from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, Mr. Rabin said he could not promise to keep the April 13 date and cast doubt on the whole timetable.

Mr. Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat decided Sunday to meet again in 10 days or so to try to overcome obstacles to implementing the Sept. 13 autonomy accord.

Under the September accord, the two sides were to

reach by last Monday an interim agreement to implement self-rule covering a four-month withdrawal, transfer of power and elections to an autonomy council by July 13.

"Just before going to the ceremony on the lawn of the White House, when we were alone, Arafat and I exchanged just one sentence. I told him, 'It is going to be very difficult,' and he said, 'I know.'"

Mr. Rabin later voiced determination in parliament to implement autonomy.

"If we don't find a political solution with the PLO there will be a surge in extremism and we will have the Hizbollah here," he warned, referring to the hardline movement which leads the armed struggle against Israeli occupation in southern Lebanon.

A PLO official said in Cairo Mr. Arafat and Mr. Rabin will meet in Cairo on Dec. 22 or 23 to resolve the deadlock.

Nabil Shaath, chief of the Palestinian negotiating team with Israel, made the announcement after meeting Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa.

Dr. Shaath said he asked Mr. Musa to mediate between the PLO and Israel to break

the impasse over security issues.

"Whenever things get complicated we resort to Egyptian diplomacy and to the Egyptian leadership to help resolve the complex issues and reach an agreement that guarantees (Palestinian) national rights in line with the declaration of principles," Dr. Shaath said.

Dr. Shaath said Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, whose country was the first to make peace with Israel, urged Mr. Musa to play "an effective role in bringing opinions closer," before the next meeting set for Wednesday or Thursday.

"The visit was to brief the minister on all details relating to the position we are in and which resulted from the Israeli proposal offered before the Arafat-Rabin meeting. We discussed the ensuing delay of the negotiations for 10 days and ways to solve the pending issues before the next meeting," Dr. Shaath said.

Dr. Shaath said a PLO-Israeli committee negotiating a transfer of civilian authority met in El Arish, on the Egyptian coast, west of the Gaza Strip.

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His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Wednesday meets with scouts during a visit he paid to the Azmi Al Mufti refugee camp near Irbid (Petra photo)

Defiant Marj Al Zohour expellees return to jails

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (Agencies) — The drama of the Palestinian expulsions to South Lebanon ended Wednesday with a bus ride back to Israeli jails for a defiant 197 men, as the violence they left behind a year ago raged on.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin issued an immediate warning that the returnees had better behave.

"We will not hesitate to take tough measures against them even if we have the slightest suspicion they intend or are involved in escalation of violence," Mr. Rabin threatened.

But the noises coming from the returnees promised trouble.

"We're going back to carry on the fight," said spokesman Abdul Aziz Rantisi, a leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) on the Gaza

Strip, which was paralysed by a Hamas strike in memory of a fighter shot dead by soldiers on Tuesday.

"When we arrive in the occupied territories there'll be an escalation and the peace negotiations will be blocked," he pledged. "We have triumphed because we are going back with our heads high."

The expulsions were intended to quell the bloodshed but as if to underline the futility, 10 Palestinians were wounded in clashes and army operations on the top of the killing on Wednesday.

The fundamentalists, the rump of 415 men expelled on Dec. 17 to South Lebanon amid world condemnation, walked from their tent camp through the Zennara checkpoint into Israeli army custody early Wednesday.

After medical and security

checks they boarded buses for the trip through an Israeli-occupied border strip in Lebanon to military jails in the desert and the Gaza Strip.

As the convoy, escorted by armed troops, crossed the border at Metulla, police held back 200 right-wing protesters shouting "death to terrorists."

Right-wing opposition Likud party leader Benjamin Netanyahu urged the government not to free the returnees.

"The release is a folly," he said. "Only yesterday we were warned to expect terrorist attacks and more terrorists are being brought back."

The fate of the 197 will be decided in the next four days, but military officials admitted many would be released, some serve out long sentences and a few face fresh trials.

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Soldiers kill Palestinian, wound 14 in Gaza Strip

GAZA CITY, occupied Gaza Strip (Agencies) — Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian and wounded 14 others in the occupied Gaza Strip on Wednesday, Palestinian and military sources said.

Ashraf Mohammad Ahmad, 20, was shot dead at a roadblock in the Jabaliya refugee camp, when he allegedly tried to attack an Israeli soldier with an axe while he was being searched, military officials said.

Two Palestinian witnesses said another soldier fired three bullets at the Palestinian and continued firing until he was dead.

In Gaza City border guards in a jeep opened fire at a civilian car, wounding five people, including a 14-year-old boy who was riding a bicycle nearby, Palestinian sources said.

In the Jabaliya refugee camp Israeli troops shot and wounded six people as demonstrators threw stones at an army post.

Three more people were wounded in clashes in Gaza City.

Nearly 300 supporters of the

Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) demonstrated in Gaza City demanding revenge for Palestinians killed in the past few days, as a general strike was observed.

Troops shot dead two Palestinians and wounded 20 on Tuesday.

Hamas also claimed responsibility on Wednesday for an attack on an Israeli bus south of Hebron in the West Bank on Sunday in which the driver was wounded.

Meanwhile the Israeli army lifted a curfew which had been in force in Hebron for the past nine days, military officials said.

The curfew was imposed on Dec. 6 following the killing of two settlers by Palestinians.

Tension between Jews and Arabs in Hebron risks spilling over into a bloody vendetta, the military commander of the occupied town has warned.

"My great fear is that an act of vengeance spawns another and that it drags into a cycle of terror innocent Arabs who might have a personal or family account to settle with Jews."

Lieutenant Colonel "M" told Wednesday's Yediot Aharanot newspaper.

"If we reach that stage our ability to control the situation will be very poor," he said. "The situation was never been as complicated. The potential for conflict... is enormous."

"It will not impose a curfew on both communities unless we enter a cycle of reciprocal acts of revenge," said M.

The lieutenant-colonel criticised the Israeli legal system and urged similar security measures against Jews as Arabs.

"When we arrest a Jew, he is brought before a judge who frees him, the police inquiry goes on endlessly and nothing happens," he complained.

On Friday a court ignored police pleading and freed a minor from the West Bank settlement of Shilo suspected of killing an Arab farmer.

He noted that Jewish children overturned Arab market stalls in Hebron with impunity.

"We have complained to the highest authorities and perhaps a police unit will have to be set up to deal with minors in Hebron," the commander said.

Russian independents hold parliament balance of power

MOSCOW (Agencies) — A hundred independent deputies could hold the balance of power in Russia's fragmented new parliament after shock initial returns from the weekend poll gave ultra-nationalists a quarter of the vote, well ahead of pro-reform and communist blocs.

Estimates credit the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) of Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, branded as fascist by its pro-reform opponents, with 24 per cent of the vote compared to 14.3 per cent for Russia's Choice — which supports the economic reforms of President Boris Yeltsin — and 13.6 per cent for the Communists.

That would hand a kingmaker role to some 100 independents — elected in regional constituencies without party label — in the shifting alliances formed within the hung parliament which meets for the first time mid-January.

Their unexpected defeat threw reformers into disarray, one leader vowing to fight systematically to block LDP-inspired laws, while communist leader Mikhail Lapshin said his party was ready to ally itself with Mr. Zhirinovskiy "on concrete issues."

Any anti-LDP alliance

would have to back a "profound change" in current government policy to win Communist support, he warned.

That raised the spectre of a repeat of the so-called "red-brown" alliance in the conservative-dominated Soviet-era parliament dissolved by Mr. Yeltsin, in which ultra-nationalists and pro-communist groups allied themselves to hamstring economic reforms.

An ebullient Mr. Zhirinovskiy said it was "up to the other parties to move towards" his own programme, which had stressed the fight against crime, a halt to economic reforms, tax cuts and placing the public sector centre stage.

If confirmed, the results would give Mr. Zhirinovskiy's party 70 seats in parliament, the Communists and their Agrarian Party allies around 40 seats each, Russia's Choice about 65, and 15 to the Russia Unity and Accord party of Vice Premier Sergei Shakhrai.

Another pro-reform group, the Women of Russia Movement, is expected to win around 20 seats after polling an estimated eight per cent.

Half the 450 seats in the new state Duma or lower house will be filled based on the results of party list voting, while the re-

maining half will be drawn from voting in constituencies on a first-past-the-post basis.

U.S. Vice President Al Gore said Wednesday the views of the big winner in the election are "repulsive and anathema to all freedom-loving people." But Mr. Gore said President Yeltsin is optimistic he can form pro-reform government.

In remarkably blunt comments, Mr. Gore twice offered stringing criticism of Mr. Zhirinovskiy. Mr. Gore urged Western allies to put more economic aid behind their support for Mr. Yeltsin's reforms.

"The views expressed by Zhirinovskiy on issues such as the use of nuclear weapons, the expansion of borders, the treatment of ethnic minorities, are reprehensible and anathema to all freedom-loving people in Russia, the United States and everywhere in the world," Mr. Gore said.

"If you want a laboratory test of those views, look at Bosnia," he said.

The visiting U.S. vice-president said that Mr. Yeltsin expressed in meetings with him optimism that he would be able to form a coalition government. He said Mr. Yeltsin

(Continued on page 5)

IAF stages walkout to protest vote against call for inquiry

By Ayman Al Safadi
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — All but three members of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) parliamentary bloc walked out from a session of the Lower House of Parliament Wednesday in protest over a decision to put to vote a proposal to end debate on their request to set up a fact-finding committee to investigate the conduct of the Nov. 8 elections.

The IAF deputies left the session in anger after accusing House Speaker Taher Al Masri of not giving them the chance to present their views before Masri's Deputy Abdullah Akhu Irsheidh proposed the House end the debate and a vote on the IAF request be taken. IAF deputies Bassam Omoush, Suleiman Al Sa'd and Badr Al Riati did not leave the session.

Over 10 deputies took the floor to speak on the IAF

motion, which the House killed with a strong majority, but the Islamists argued most of the speakers who took the floor were opposed to the request which was signed by 14 IAF deputies.

Mr. Masri, supported by other deputies, said he was applying the internal regulations of the House when he asked the deputies to vote on whether the debate should stop after Deputy Akhu Irsheidh forwarded his proposal.

Mr. Masri also said that the seating order determined who among the deputies was given the floor, adding that the viewpoint given by IAF Deputy Hamzeh Mansour should represent that of all deputies who signed the request.

The IAF deputies had asked for the formation of a fact-finding committee to put an end to the debate over the conduct of the elections.

Deputies opposed to the

request argued that the House had already set up committees to look into contestations of the results of the polls, adding that setting up a new panel would cast doubt on and conflict with the work of the contestations committees.

"I will resign from the contestation committee if a new committee is set up," said Deputy Sa'd Hayel Srou (Northern Bedouins), whose argument received the support of seven deputies who spoke on the issue.

Masri's Deputy Abdul Karim Dughmi, who walked out of the session along with IAF deputies, said the committee should be established to clear all questions about the integrity of the elections. He said the committee could come up with findings that could lead to a vote of no confidence in the Cabinet or some of its members. "This is

(Continued on page 5)

Historic world trade agreement endorsed

GENEVA (AP) — Negotiations from 117 nations reached final agreement Wednesday on a huge trade pact intended to boost the global economy by slashing tariffs and other barriers to trade.

Peter Sutherland, head of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), received an extended standing ovation as he greeted the negotiators closed on what he called "the most far-reaching trade agreement ever."

"I am convinced that today will be seen as a defining moment in modern economic and political history," he said.

"Today the world has chosen openness and cooperation instead of uncertainty and conflict," Mr. Sutherland said.

land said.

The 400-page agreement will be formally signed in Marrakesh, Morocco, in April. The agreement faces contentious legislative battles before going into effect in 1995. In the United States, Congress cannot begin debating the measure before April 15 at the earliest.

The trade pact slashes tariffs on thousands of manufactured products from computer chips to potato chips.

It would also expand the rules of world trade, for the first time covering agricultural products and the rapidly expanding service sector.

The agreement will also establish a new world trade organisation with tougher enforcement powers to succeed GATT.

U.N. Kuwait compensation fund sees April payments

GENEVA (Agencies) — The U.N. commission handling 800,000 claims for compensation for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait said Wednesday it expected to make its first payments, totalling between \$3 million and \$5 million, by April.

Initial payments cover 1,100 citizens from 19 countries who suffered serious injury or the death of a relative in the August 1990 invasion and seven-month occupation of the emirate.

Awards of up to \$2,500 can be made, with a limit of \$10,000 per family. United Nations officials said more than 2,500 further claims in this category were still to be evaluated.

"Contrary to what has been

expected of this operation, often surrounded by scepticism, the first payments are now around the corner," said Carlos Alzamora, executive secretary of the U.N. compensation commission, established by the Security Council.

He said individuals were being given priority over companies and governments. The first group of claimants was "the most sensitive in humanitarian terms and therefore deserving of priority," the Peruvian envoy said.

When it is eventually allowed to resume oil exports, barred by the security council since August 1990, Baghdad will be required to pay a third of its oil revenues into a U.N. fund to cover the cost of compensation and humanitarian

efforts.

In February, U.N. officials said, two panels will review claims for two other categories: Forced departures from Iraq and Kuwait, and individual claims for losses up to \$100,000.

Mr. Alzamora said the commission hoped to make awards of between \$100 million and \$200 million in July, covering approximately 50,000 of the total of 800,000 claims from 78 countries.

He conceded that the commission currently had only \$29 million towards making awards, but expected more contributions.

Iraq to evacuate border area

(Continued on page 5)

هكذا عندنا حال

Israel counts cost as exiles return to continuing violence

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The last of 415 Palestinians expelled a year ago return to their homeland with the violence their expulsion was intended to halt raging as strong as ever.

The expulsion changed nothing fundamentally and has not altered the balance of power, Anat Kurz, a specialist on extremism at Tel Aviv's Strategic Studies Centre, told AFP.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin took the dramatic decision to throw out supporters of hardline Islamic factions on Dec. 17 after the killing of policeman Nissim Toledano followed the killing of five soldiers.

However, Israeli self-congratulation soon rebounded as world opinion, outraged by Christmas pictures of the expelled men huddled on a snowy hillside, angrily condemned the expulsions.

"The expulsion was a great propaganda success for Hamas," Mr. Kurz said. "The PLO (Palestine Liberation Organisation) was forced to stand by Hamas and suspended the peace negotiations."

Not only did the government have to suffer U.N. demands for immediate repatriation and a supreme court battle, it also had to admit crass blunders.

Within days, Israel confessed to 10 cases of mistaken identity, including an innocent 16-year-old Palestinian boy. The number of mistaken identities rose to 16 and 19 men finally had to be ferried back.

Under intense pressure, Mr. Rabin struck a deal with the United States on Feb. 2 offering to let 101 return and halving the exile of the remainder

to one year. The Palestinians refused.

But conditions improved in the camp between Israeli and Lebanese lines and the deal staved off U.N. sanctions and enabled the Middle East peace negotiations to resume in April.

Back in Israel and the occupied territories the violence resumed with a vengeance after an initial lull.

In March, the army had to seal off the occupied territories to restore control after the death of 15 Israelis in three weeks.

By Dec. 9, the sixth anniversary of the uprising, a record 55 Israelis had been killed by Palestinians, compared with 39 in 1993, the previous heaviest yearly toll of the intifada.

The leading Israeli human rights group B'tselem counted 175 Palestinians killed by Israelis during the sixth year, 42 children under the age of 16. That marked a 36 per cent jump in the numbers killed over 1992.

B'tselem noted that the expulsions were carried out officially for "essential security needs."

"Not only did the deportation fail to improve the security situation, in its wake the number of those killed on both sides... increased dramatically," the group said.

"In the first six months after the deportation twice as many Palestinians were killed in the territories as in the previous six months."

"Carried out in contravention to the unequivocal prohibition on deportation in international law, and in flagrant

violation of the right to due process," B'tselem described the expulsion as "one of the most grave human rights violations."

From the Israeli point of view not all was black.

"I don't regret the decision," said Labour Deputy Orr, chairman of parliament's defence and foreign affairs committee. "It's true that it struck a certain blow against Hamas, but clearly it did not crush the movement."

"The main thing was the effect on Israeli opinion. We absolutely had to prove the government was ready to hit hard and by proving that we went into the peace process," the reserve general said.

Labour Party General Secretary Nissim Ziv also justified the public relations disaster. "The expulsion was necessary at the time when it was carried out because we were beginning to lose control," he said.

"We knew from the start it would not be a panacea. It is very hard to destroy a movement like Hamas. The only way to do that is progress in the peace process."

For researcher Kurz any damage to Hamas was limited by the separation of cells from the political side, "so it had no effect at the security level."

"In the long term, however, the Hamas propaganda coup was relative because the Israel-PLO negotiations resumed and even developed at a higher level."

But one of the major impediments to the Palestinian autonomy agreement is daily violence: Suicide bombings, shootings or stabbings.

U.N. states voice strong support for peace process

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — The General Assembly set aside its traditional criticism of Israel Tuesday, voting overwhelmingly for a resolution voicing unconditional support for progress made to date in the Israeli-Arab peace process.

The assembly said the declaration of principles between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) on Palestinian autonomy, and the agreement between Israel and Jordan on a common agenda, marked "an important first step towards bringing a comprehensive, just and lasting peace to the Middle East."

The resolution "calls upon all member states to extend economic, financial and technical assistance to states in the region and to render support for the peace process."

The text drew 155 supporting votes, on a ballot called by Syria and Lebanon. Three countries voted against it with one abstaining.

The document had been the subject of extensive debate between U.S. diplomats and Palestinians, as well as among Arab U.N. member states.

The United States and European union countries this year have made a concerted effort to curb the number of General Assembly resolutions criticising Israel.

Moment after the resolution on the peace process was passed, however, the assembly adopted two other texts calling the Israeli annexation of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights illegal.

The PLO observer at the United Nations, Nasser Al Kidwa, said the resolution on progress towards peace "opens the way for a full U.N. engagement" in the process.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright noted it was the first time the General Assembly officially threw its support behind the process begun in Madrid in 1991 "after decades of division and discord."

Disaster catches up on Cairo 'zebbalin'

By Haro Chakmakjian
Agence France Presse

CAIRO — The "zebbalin" who live and work with garbage on the fringes of Egypt's capital escaped the 1992 killer earthquake but another natural disaster has caught up with them a year later.

At least 34 people died in their sleep on Tuesday as cliffs over a southeastern suburb collapsed in a landslide and sent boulders crashing down onto the garbage collectors' shantytown of Dweqa.

The victims were trapped by the landslide from the 100-metre-high Mokattam hill that struck like a thief in the night.

Officials said three thousand tonnes of boulders rained down from the Mokattam stone quarry onto buildings in the heavily-populated slum, which is home to around 10,000 zebbalin who recycle Cairo's garbage.

More than 10 apartment buildings were destroyed along with several one-storey homes. Many other homes were damaged or cracked.

"We thought it was another earthquake," said an old woman. In 1992, a quake claimed more than 550 lives in and around Cairo, tearing down poorly-built homes, but the zebbalin were largely

spared at the time.

At the foot of Mokattam, the zebbalin live in a network of alleys, either in simple brick homes or shacks erected without permits from the authorities.

Prime Minister Atef Sedki visited Dweqa and pledged the government would speed up a programme to renovate the slum districts of the capital, which were the worst hit in the earthquake.

Relief workers said the cause of the landslide could have been a late after-effect of the quake or an underground build-up of sewage.

Ali Abdul Azim of the National Geophysical Centre said stagnant waters were infiltrating and wearing away the limestone. The burning of left-overs from garbage may also have eroded the soil.

Set against a semi-circle of hills which have been quarried since ancient times, Dweqa is home to the largest community of zebbalin, which means garbage-workers in Arabic. The zebbalin run family recycling businesses, sorting or trading.

Each family has its own network of Cairo streets from which to collect and pay for its turf from other zebbalin who have deals with landlords.

Norwegian publisher says Iran behind attack

OSLO, Norway (Agencies) — The Norwegian publisher of "The Satanic Verses" said Tuesday that he believed he was shot two months ago because of Iran's condemnation of Salman Rushdie's book.

William Nygaard, 50, was shot three times with a 44-caliber pistol outside his Oslo home by an unknown assailant on Oct. 11. He was expected to recover fully.

In his first appearance since the shooting, Mr. Nygaard said the evidence seems to link the attack to the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini of Iran. In 1989, Ayatollah Khomeini declared "Mr. Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses' blasphemous and ordered the death of the writer and all those connected with the book."

"We must remember that the death threats have come from only one place; threats that were aimed against a Japanese translator and an Italian translator who survived," Mr. Nygaard told the national news agency NTB.

A Japanese translator was stabbed to death in 1991, the Italian translator survived a stabbing the same year and, last July, violence erupted in Turkey after a newspaper published excerpts of Mr. Rushdie's book.

Oslo police released a drawing of what they said was a dark, probably foreign suspect on Nov. 19, but said they still had no proven link to the book or to Iran.

The Iranian embassy in Oslo issued a statement in October denying any connection to the attack.

"Do any of you believe, that the Iranian embassy in Oslo was unaware that this attack was going to happen? I won't answer directly, but I think you understand what I am thinking," Mr. Nygaard said in a radio interview at the Sundaas hospital outside Oslo.

Mr. Nygaard was among the first European publisher of "The Satanic Verses," which he released in Norwegian in 1989. He has also been an outspoken supporter of Mr. Rushdie, who lives in hiding.

Mr. Nygaard told NTB that the timing of the attack might have been inspired by Norway's role in secret peace talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

About a month before the shooting, Norwegian Foreign Minister Johan Jorgen Holst revealed months of backdoor talks in Norway led to an accord that was signed in Washington in September.

It was not clear how long Mr. Nygaard would have to remain in the hospital. He said he was making steady progress, but still suffered pain and stiffness from his wounds.

Former Iranian diplomat Parviz Khazai, now a dissident living in Norway, has said he was certain Iran was behind the attack.

Norwegian police have said they are working on several theories and were not necessarily linking the shooting to the Norwegian translation of Mr. Rushdie's novel.

Mr. Nygaard was scheduled to attend a Christmas dinner at the Norwegian publishers' association in Oslo on Monday night, but a bomb threat was called in just before he was about to arrive.

"A woman's voice said that a bomb was placed in the cellar," Trygve Rømborg, chairman of the Norwegian publishers' association, told state television NRK.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Morocco denies plans to boost Israel ties

RABAT (AFP) — Morocco has denied U.S. press reports that it had decided to strengthen economic ties to Israel in a move that could lead to a normalisation in relations between the two countries. The Foreign Ministry stressed that "any possible change in attitude" towards Israel "can only come within the framework of a unanimous decision by the Arab League." The New York Times reported Monday that King Hassan II of Morocco met Friday evening in Rabat with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and discussed a series of accords to be applied in the "immediate" future with Israel. The accords called for boosting diplomatic and economic ties, including increasing the number of flights and opening up telephone links and postal service — between Morocco and Israel. The agreement, according to paper, also called for allowing religious and business leaders to travel to either country and to establish bank ties to facilitate trade.

Israel criticises Russian nationalist vote

TEL AVIV (R) — Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres criticised the strong nationalist vote in Russia's parliamentary election and called on Tuesday for all Jews to live in Israel. "I think the Russians have voted rightly on the constitution and wrongly on the parliament but it is their decision. What I can say to all Jewish people is that their place is here," Mr. Peres told reporters at the Israeli Knesset (parliament). The head of Germany's Jewish community, Ignatz Bubis, said he expected more Russian Jews now to emigrate. A spokesman for the Jewish Agency, in charge of bringing Jews to Israel, said he did not foresee dramatic changes. Unofficial results from Monday's Russian poll put the party of radical nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy far ahead of its rivals. Voters also approved a new constitution granting President Boris Yeltsin strong powers. Mr. Zhirinovskiy includes in his programme a commitment to fight Zionism. He rejects accusations of anti-Semitism, saying he has nothing against Jews but only opposes Zionism. Nearly 500,000 Jews have come to Israel from the former Soviet Union since mid-1989 under reforms initiated by Mikhail Gorbachev. The pace of immigration slowed considerably in 1992. The Jewish Agency estimates 1,434,300 Jews remain in the Commonwealth of Independent States.

Lebanese workers abandon strike plan

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon's main labour union confederation agreed Tuesday to call off a general strike after a last-minute deal with the government, union sources said. The decision was made after a meeting between Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri and leaders of the CGTL labour confederation Tuesday night. The CGTL executive committee approved a compromise hammered out by Labour Minister Abdullah Al Amin and CGTL leaders and agreed to abandon the strike, they said. The agreement includes an increase in family allowances and other fringe benefits to workers as of July 1994. The CGTL had demanded an increase in the benefits as of January 1994. The government had said a pay rise of up to 70 per cent in 1994 was enough and was not willing to increase the benefits along with the salaries.

Turkish police arrest Kurdish politician

ISTANBUL (R) — Police arrested a senior Kurdish politician Tuesday and troops killed the separatist guerrillas in southeast Turkey, the Anatolian news agency said. Anatolian, quoting security officials, said police had arrested Ibrahim AKOP, secretary-general of the pro-Kurdish Democracy Party (DEP), for two speeches he made in Konya and Adana cities earlier this year. It was not immediately clear what charges he faced. DEP has 17 deputies in the 450-member national legislature. Troops killed three members of the rebel Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) in a clash near Nusaybin, in Mardin province, close to the Syrian border, Anatolian said. Quoting the regional emergency rule governor's office, it said 28 people, including six lawyers, were detained for collaborating with the PKK. About 10,500 people have been killed in Turkey since the PKK launched a guerrilla war for an independent Kurdish homeland in the southeast in 1984.

Top U.S. general to visit Somalia

WASHINGTON (R) — Army General John Shalikashvili, America's top military officer, said Tuesday he will fly to Somalia Saturday to discuss the withdrawal of U.S. forces from that country. The chairman of the U.S. military Joint Chiefs of Staff told reporters he would leave Washington Saturday and return the middle of next week after discussing the situation with top U.S. military officers in Mogadishu. President Bill Clinton has promised to withdraw all but a few hundred of the 8,100 American troops now in Somalia by March 31.

Arab envoys to Bulgaria lodge protest

SOFIA (R) — Arab ambassadors to Sofia protested to Bulgarian authorities on Tuesday against the reaction by the police and media to the death of a Bulgarian policeman in a raid on suspected Iranian drug dealers. The official BTA news agency quoted a Foreign Ministry statement as saying the Arab envoys met Foreign Minister Stanislav Daskalov to express their concern over the treatment of their citizens following the incident. The statement said Mr. Daskalov pointed out to the ambassadors that the Bulgarian media were independent, but stressed that his ministry was ready to cooperate to clarify the issue. A police officer was shot dead and two were badly injured by Iranians on Dec. 6 during a drug raid on a flat in a Sofia suburb, the Interior Ministry said. Police later shot dead two Iranians suspected of having been involved in the incident during a manhunt involving raids on residential areas where immigrants from the Middle East live. State television showed a document it said was sent by a hitherto unknown organisation called "Free Bulgaria" to all Arab embassies in Sofia threatening to kill their citizens if they did not leave by the end of January.

unicef

United Nations Children's Fund

The United Nations Children's Fund, seeks qualified Jordanian candidates for the following position:

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Under the direct supervision of the Regional Advisor/Education, the Assistant Project Officer/Education will assist in undertaking activities pertaining to the development, planning, implementation and analysis of education strategies for children and women in the Middle East and North Africa countries. Help to coordinate and run training workshops and seminars. Assist and supervise the carrying out of studies on primary education, out-of-school learning, learning achievement and establish indicators on girls' education and gender disparities. Represent UNICEF at regional and national conferences in the field of basic education for children and women.

Minimum qualifications:

An advanced University Degree in Education (at least a Master's Degree). Five years or more of relevant working experience in the field of Basic Education. Fluency and strong written skills in English and Arabic. French an asset. Knowledge of computer systems and applications or willingness to learn.

Please send detailed resume, in English, quoting reference NO/93-05 to:

Chief of Operations
UNICEF Regional Office
P. O. Box 811721,
11181 Amman - Jordan

Qualified women and minorities are encouraged to apply. Applications for this position must be received not later than 30 December 1993.

Acknowledgement will only be sent to short-listed candidates under serious consideration.

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**** Jean - Marie SENIA ****

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- The French Cultural Center, Tel. 637009
- Goethe-Institut, Tel. 641993

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
17:30 Tanatara
18:00 News in French
19:15 Renouveau
19:30 News in Hebrew
20:05 News in Arabic
20:35 Family Matters
21:00 Ricki's World
21:30 News in English
22:30 Film "Sengals Fly Low"

PRAYER TIMES

05:01 Fajr
06:23 (Sunrise) Dhuhur
14:15 Asr
16:38 Maghreb
18:30 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifish Tel. 510740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 622785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 625441
De la Salle Church Tel. 641757
Terresanta Church Tel. 623360
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 625441
Anglican Church Tel. 63851, Tel.

628543.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Assuan International Church Tel. 653230.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 654328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 654195.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932.
Church of Nazareth Tel. 675691.

WEATHER

It will be sunny as temperatures will slightly rise, and winds will be south-westerly light to moderate. In Agaba, winds will be northerly moderate and sea calm.

Min. max. temp.
Amman 3 / 15
Agaba 9 / 22
Deserts 1 / 17
Jordan Valley 8 / 21

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 12, Agaba 30. Humidity readings: Amman 20 per cent, Agaba 52 per cent.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDER

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Youssef Sammour 615648
Dr. Isam Al Azzam 890504
Dr. Farouq Nour 786080
Dr. Bahjat Badr 849362
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637035
Nairowah pharmacy 626272
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yazoub pharmacy 649465
Shmeisani pharmacy 627660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID: Dr. Ahmad Qanu 272032
Al Quds pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES
Civil Defence Department 661111

Civil Defence: Immediate
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 891228
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 603800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage
Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information
(directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone
Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 961101
Jordan Television 731111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power
Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 68-53200
Queen Abla Intl. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Husseini Medical Centre 813813/2
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn. 642816
Aklich Maternity, J. Amn. 64241/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Mabius, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 645845
Al-Mushar Hospital 66727/9
The Islamic, Abdali 651646
Al-Abdi, Abdali 77101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 77111/26
Army, Marka 89161/1/5
Queen Abla Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674153
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09) 863323
Zarqa National Hospital (09) 900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09) 986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09) 909090
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02) 275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02) 272275
Ibn Al-Nafies Hospital (02) 247100
AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital (03) 314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA

INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (06) 53202-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
(Terminal 1)
04:30 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
04:30 Aden (RJ)
07:10 Sanaa (RJ)
09:25 Agaba (RJ)
09:30 Riyadh (RJ)
10:30 Beirut (RJ)
10:30 New Delhi (RJ)
10:30 Colombo (RJ)
10:30 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:15 London, Berlin (RJ)
18:30 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
19:00 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
19:00 Athens, Larnaca (RJ)
20:00 Rome (RJ)
23:00 Cairo (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

13:00 Riyadh (SU)
16:35 Rome (AZ)
16:40 Dubai (EM)
20:05 Cairo (MS)
22:25 Istanbul (TK)
23:15 Amsterdam (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights

(Terminal 1)
06:00 Beirut (RJ)
07:00 Agaba (RJ)
11:00 Rome (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
11:05 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
11:15 Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:30 Larnaca, Athens (RJ)
11:30 Cucumbers (RJ)
12:05 London (RJ)
19:05 Jeddah (RJ)
20:30 Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
21:05 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:05 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

05:05 Damascus, Paris (AF)
08:15 Beirut (ME)
14:30 Riyadh (SA)
17:05 Dubai (RJ)
18:35 Damascus (AZ)
20:05 Cairo (MS)
00:25 Amsterdam (KL)

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Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

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Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 720/430
Banana 680
Beans (Mushammar) 420
Beans 600 / 420
Cabbage 90 / 50
Carrot 240/160
Cauliflower 180 / 100
Cucumber 180 / 120
Cucumbers (large) 200 / 100
Cucumbers (small) 350 / 300
Eggplant 180 / 100
Garlic 900/600
Grape Fruit 170/120
Lemon 150 / 100
Marrow (large) 200 / 100
Marrow (small) 350 / 300
Olives (green) 700/500
Orange 350 / 100
Onion (dry) 250 / 150
Onion (green) 250 / 150
Pepper (hot) 280 / 200
Pepper (sweet) 280 / 200
Potato 120 / 80
Radish 350 / 200
Tomato 350 / 200
Spinach 200 / 150

Princess Sarvath inspects annex of Red Crescent Society hospital

AMMAN (Petra) — Her Royal Highness Princess Sarvath Al Hassan, honorary chairperson of the women's branch of the Jordan National Red Crescent Society (JNRCS) Wednesday inspected the annex of the society's hospital which is partially completed.

Princess Sarvath met with several specialists and representatives from Red Cross societies of other countries who are currently visiting Jordan, and answered questions about the different services offered by the society to the local community.

The Princess outlined the mother and child care services provided through the society and other health services in the Kingdom.

She also briefed the visitors

on Jordanian women's contributions to the JNRCS branches in different parts of the country, noting that she planned visits to these branches in order to help stimulate local women's participation in voluntary programmes that help serve the local communities and needy families.

JNRCS Executive President Mohammad Hadid outlined the main activities of the society over the past few years, pointing out the enormous help offered to the evacuees and displaced persons during the 1990 Gulf crisis, the assistance to local communities during the snow storms of the past years, especially in southern Jordan, and the food, clothing and medicine distributed to them.

Dr. Hadid announced that

the society plans to expand its services by opening new branches in other regions to provide health services.

Referring to the annex at the hospital, he said that the expansion aims at increasing the number of beds to 150 up from 63 at the hospital and expanding the medical cadre and services to the public.

Dr. Hadid announced that through its efforts the society has been able to raise funds and technical help from numerous countries which contributed to this annex, noting that assistance came from the United States, Britain, Germany, Japan and Australia among others.

Princess Sarvath later called at the society's Vocational Training Centre for women and inspected its services and activities.

RJ evaluates its strengths, weaknesses on 30th anniversary of national carrier

By Samir Shafiq
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Royal Jordanian (RJ) expects to post an operating profit of JD 45 million and a net profit of JD 2-3 million after paying about JD 50 million to service debts, RJ President and Chief Executive Officer Mahmoud Jamal Balqez Wednesday told the 30th annual marketing conference of the airline.

Mr. Balqez told his audience of airline officials, who met at the Forte Grand Hotel on the 30th anniversary of the birth of the national carrier, that debts were still high and "we are not out of the woods yet."

"We have to make prolonged and sustained efforts to generate higher revenues, in addition to reducing costs, otherwise the twin shall never meet," he said.

RJ's chief mentioned that some routes were still incurring losses and he emphasised that each route should be able to stand on its own.

"Last year we were successful in reducing the actual cost per seat-kilometre by nine per cent over 1991 and planned another reduction this year. The way our expenses have moved in 1993, we may not do better than a 3.5 per cent improvement," he said, adding that cost per tonne-kilometre, reduced by 1.4 per cent last year over 1991 and projected to go down further this year by 7.8 per cent, actually went down by only 2.5 per cent.

One of the major reasons for this drawback, said Mr. Balqez, was the abrupt increase in fuel prices in Jordan.

Cost reductions
Mr. Balqez told the airline

staff that they should be on a constant cost reduction programme, noting that telecommunication expenses were still high despite various appeals for reduction.

"We must exercise maximum economy in the use of telephones and telexes besides travel, employment and a number of other administrative expenses," he said.

Mr. Balqez added that "a new central purchase and stores department has been established to streamline RJ's purchases and inventories with a view to achieving better savings and efficient use."

Passenger traffic

During the first 11 months of this year, passenger traffic increased by 12 per cent over the same period of last year. But, Mr. Balqez said, the increase was nine per cent below target.

"We had projected a 22 per cent increase in 1993 traffic over that of 1992 because of the new route to Chicago and full year operation to Jakarta, Athens and Aden routes; without these operations, anticipated increase was only eight per cent," he explained.

According to Mr. Balqez, the 1992 seat factor was 65.4 per cent while it is important that it be at least 70 per cent in order to be comfortably above the break-even point. Indications are that seat factor by the end of the year will be 65 per cent.

Mr. Balqez noted that sales on routes within the Far East, Jordan and Middle East show higher growth than the planned European Far East route

systems. "Far East is a long range and represents one-fifth of our total seat capacity. This is quite a large chunk and warrants more sustained efforts in that direction," he emphasised.

The European region represents one quarter of RJ passenger operations, said Mr. Balqez, and since the European routes' revenue yield almost twice as much as the long-range routes, RJ sees it must to nurture them carefully, he added.

"The new policy of reducing reliance on the European-Far East traffic should produce still better results," Mr. Balqez affirmed. North American routes fared well last summer, but, Mr. Balqez said, they seem to be dragging their feet in the low season. We do expect lower load factors in winter but some of the flights were so alarming that much against our wishes we had to cancel them.

Both the U.S. and Canada routes recorded a very good increase of 23 per cent over 1992, though still nine per cent below the target, against a big boost in capacity this year of more than 30 per cent over the last year, with Chicago becoming on-line and extra flights to Canada, Mr. Balqez explained.

"While we are looking forward to the new traffic for the new peace, the biggest challenge to these services is the on-coming competition from more European and new U.S. carriers. While you should be planning to harness the new traffic you should also brace yourself from now for the onslaught of the mega-carriers on the route," Mr. Balqez stressed to the airline's area managers.

The South Asian routes have performed admirably well as a whole but not without a shortfall on the target caused by the low load factor of the Delhi route. "Much to our disappointment traffic is not responding to the third Delhi service and in spite of it being detected, it has not improved. We must seriously look into its traffic performance and profitability or deploy the capacity somewhere else," he pointed out.

Cargo traffic development

The special committee which looked into all aspects of the cargo operations after the poor performance of cargo uplifts and all-cargo services in 1991 and 1992, said in its report: "Apparently nothing seems to be wrong with the set-up of the cargo sales and operations but, at the same time, nothing seemed to be moving right. All the ingredients are in place, it is the attitude that was lacking."

As such, Mr. Balqez said, two major discrepancies — the attitude at large and dispatch reliability of the freighters — had to be tackled at once.

"The other two drawbacks of higher aircraft cost and overhead allocation are being tackled continually. Aircraft lease costs were reduced 27 per cent, while the overheads, if not borne by all-cargo services, had to be borne by passenger services," he explained.

As a result, the all-cargo services have shown a distinct improvement over the past year.

Yet, while the technical dispatch reliability has improved

from 87.6 per cent to 89.5 per cent, the overall schedule punctuality was below 50 per cent, that is every other flight was delayed, said Mr. Balqez.

Standard of service

Mr. Balqez said the motto for this year was "the commitment to quality" and RJ should continue to do so to meet the growing competition.

"We must improve our service across the board," he stressed.

"Our flight service and catering is holding out fairly well but we need to make further improvements by not just being lavish in food provisioning but by providing better quality service and presentation. There is a clear distinction between generosity and quality of service. Ground services need vast improvements which can best be brought about by the human factor — our attitude and concern for the comfort and well-being of the customers," he elaborated.

Competition

Mr. Balqez said competition was getting tougher each day, noting that "it is the greatest challenge we have to face for years to come."

He told the airline staff to expect more competition in the new peace environment.

"We can definitely expect El-Al to be directly competing us for the new traffic. It has already started air service to the Far East so would major Far Eastern carriers inaugurate their air services to our region sooner than you may think. Two U.S. carriers have already

(Continued on page 6)

'The twilight of hope'

A Circassian film with a message

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — If you did not have the chance before to see Thornton Wilder's play "Our Town," a newly released Circassian film entitled "The Twilight of Hope" could provide the material for analogy and comparison.

There can hardly be any businesslike between the two productions. But the similarity of the scenario, the unartificial set-up, and the innocence of environment, can lead to the only possible conclusion, i.e., a most extraordinary case of, let us say, an artistic or cinematic telepathy.

This similarity between the two works assumes yet an additional dimension, in light of the geographical and social gap that separates Wilder's America from that of North Caucasus.

The latter was shut off from the outside world since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, until 1990 when it started to open up gradually.

What makes these two works close to identical is the plotless scenario. It is more a run-down of daily life, with its ups and downs, its excitement and dullness, and its bright and gloomy days.

In such a context a human being is but a stage of his or her social and economic environment. To make life less boring, people tend, as it seems to create their own problems that sometimes go out of control.

Also, in such simple rural environment a boy's greatest adventure could be to feed a quasi domesticated horse. And for a young woman, to have a clandestine romantic rendezvous with her would-be husband under the glow of moonlight.

The most heated debate among the villagers could concentrate on which comes first: beauty of the woman, or the sheer physical force of man.

Weddings in those unsophisticated communities are the

ultimate social events which bring all the villagers together, almost all.

But life is not limited to these pleasant social activities.

Such occurrences could be the delay of rainfall in winter. In the movie, when one of the women hears the rainfall, after a long dry-spell, she comes out in the house yard, stretches her hands against the rain and says "poor as much as you should, and stop when you had enough."

Death must come too, whether humanly premeditated or divinely designed.

Earth, that gives all, can take its sons and daughters back, in no special order!

The scenes in the movie are picturesque and breathtaking; the sound track is, largely, successful in catching up with the wonders of nature.

It is the simplest plot of scenario that one can imagine, but there is a message for all of us.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Regent visits PSD

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, the Regent, Wednesday voiced his deep appreciation of the work of the Public Security Department (PSD), praising their endeavours in ensuring the Jordanian society's stability and security. Speaking during a visit he made to the PSD offices, the Crown Prince said that security and stability were vital elements to national development. If each responsible official and each individual institution assumes responsibility, many of the social problems in our country can be resolved, said the Regent.

Minister meets with U.S. think-tank team

AMMAN (J.T.) — Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hassan Wednesday discussed Middle East affairs and Jordan's role in and commitment to the peace process with a visiting seven-member team from the Washington Institute for Near East Policy (WINEP). Mr. Hassan

reviewed the difficulties encountered by Jordan as a result of the developments in the region, including three major waves of Palestinian refugees and more than 1.5 million evacuees at the start of the Gulf crisis. Jordan continues to face the consequences of the U.N. embargo and the unjustified siege on Aqaba which is causing extensive damage to the Kingdom's economy. The minister told the group which included WINEP Executive Director Robert Saloff, Paul Wolfowitz, Michael Mandelbaum, William Marshall, David Aikman, Paul Rosenfeld and Paul Gigot. The group left for Damascus.

NGOs to promote child rights

AMMAN — A two-day regional NGO (Non governmental Organisations) Forum on promotion of Child Rights will be held here Dec. 18-19. The Forum, which brings together around 40 people from 14 Arab countries is organised by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Regional Office for the Middle East and North Africa.

Tourism ministry has tough task ahead, says minister

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Dr. Mohammad Adwan said the ministry has a tough task ahead of it, especially in the Middle East peace process which shows some progress.

Dr. Adwan, in an interview with the Jordan Times, said new measures will be adopted to reorganise the ministry to support its departments with human and material resources to meet the challenges ahead, adding that officials should recognise the importance of tourism because it will have a financial impact on the economy of Jordan.

"The importance of the tourism industry, I believe, is underestimated in the whole society, and it ought to be the most important industry for resources of our national economy," Dr. Adwan told the Jordan Times.

He said the ministry is in the

process of developing a three-year master plan for tourism in the Kingdom, taking into consideration the new challenges ahead, (relative stability and the possibility of peace).

"Jordan has to take all possible scenarios for developing an appropriate policy for tourism," Dr. Adwan said.

The plan focuses on improving tourist sites in the Kingdom, to meet the expected demands in the coming future, mainly Petra and the Dead Sea, he said.

Dr. Adwan stressed the importance of stability in the region, which will encourage repeat tourism as well as new to the area.

In addition, Dr. Adwan said the ministry will give priority to the private sector in recognising its role and providing it with facilities, by introducing better legislation and helping to build a better infrastructure of the tourist attractions in Jordan.

"This requires us to develop

an institution that will be more efficient and more service-oriented, and to enhance public awareness of the importance of tourism to the country," he said.

Petra is one of the master projects on the ministry agenda, Dr. Adwan said, adding that six new hotels are expected to be built to meet the demands, but under strict specifications, taking into account the special architectural heritage and spirit of their historical treasure.

He told the Jordan Times that there are more requests to build additional facilities, but the ministry plans to freeze any such environmental and infrastructure considerations and the ministry guarantees that no harm will come to the unique environment of Petra.

The minister also stressed the importance of the Dead Sea as one of the most significant treasures in Jordan possessing a rare natural quality. He pointed out that this site

can offer a different kind of attraction, especially in the therapeutic area because of the sea and mud's rich mineral content which has been proven to be beneficial in the treatment of various conditions such as psoriasis.

"The Dead Sea area has the least UV (Ultraviolet Radiation) rays, which means tourists can sunbathe with the least risk of skin cancer or sun burn."

In addition, the air in the sea's vicinity, which is the lowest spot on earth, has 7 to 10 times the amount of oxygen than any other place in the world. All these qualities make it a priority for us to develop this important region and to make it one of the main tourist attractions of the Kingdom.

The ministry also seeks to augment security patrols to tourist sites to insure the tourists' safety and deter any harassment of tourists.

The Cabinet recently established a high commission headed by the Minister of

Tourism to recommend to the government the possibility of placing security guards in the Petra region.

A plan whereby interested private sector and businesspersons can lease or buy land to establish tourism projects in the area is in the process of being drafted, said Dr. Adwan.

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, who recently visited the region, said at a press conference in Amman on Dec. 7 that his discussion with His Majesty King Hussein included "investment issues, trade issues and a tremendous promise of tourism to this area which would create hundreds of thousands of jobs."

A week earlier, President of the American Society of Travel Agents (ASTA) Earlene Causey also was in Jordan to study ways of promoting Jordanian tourism on a worldwide scale and work on developing a tourism package in light of an expected peace accord.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

EXHIBITIONS

- ★ Art exhibition by a number of Jordanian artists entitled "The Sixth Exhibition — Samples From The Contemporary Jordanian Art 93" at the Spanish Cultural Centre.
- ★ Art exhibition by Jordanian artists Khalid Hijazi, Mohammad Al Ameri, and Adnan Al Sharif at Phoenix Gallery for Art and Culture (Tel. 695291).
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Hani Al Hourani entitled "Impressions from Wadi Al Waslah" at Baladna Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by Iraqi artist Salam Jamil at Alia Art Gallery.
- ★ Art exhibition by artist Samia Zarou at the Open Studio "Al Marsam Al Maftuh," Jabel Amman.

2nd Circle (9:00-12:00 and 15:00-17:00 all days except Fridays).

- ★ Photographic exhibition by artist Basheir Al-Hajeh at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Two exhibitions of paintings by Edilbert De La Portilla and Pitr Pawinczek at the Royal Cultural Centre.
- ★ Exhibition of "Prints and Drawings of Fakhreissa Zeid" (1915-1991) until the 15th of January '94 at Darat at Funn of the

Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, also showing the "Permanent" Exhibition. (Tel. 643251/2).


- ★ Plastic art exhibition by a number of Iraqi artists at La Casa Art Gallery (between the 5th and 6th Circles).
- ★ Exhibition of paintings by artist Khalid Khreis at the French Cultural Centre.

and composes Jean-Marie Senia) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m. (on Thursday) (65 minutes).

- ★ Film entitled "One Hundred and One Dalmatians" at the American Center at 5:00 p.m. (on Thursday) (80 minutes).
- ★ Video film in English entitled "Picasso-I" (with commentary) in Arabic by Ms. May Mudhaffar at 5:00 p.m. at Darat Al Funn of Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation in Jabel Luweibdeh (on Thursday).

FILMS

- ★ Film entitled "Nosferatu the Vampire" (with live musical performance by famous French pianist



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An independent Arab daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation

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Editor-in-Chief:
GEORGE S. HAWATMEH

Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 667171/6, 670141-4

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Choice for Ammanites

ALTHOUGH Dr. Mamdouh Abbadi seems to be doing a good job in running the city of Amman and its environs, the proposal to have the mayor of Amman and the other members of its municipal council elected directly by the residents of the capital received a boost when Prime Minister Abdul Salam Al Majali signalled the agreement of his new government with the idea when a Member of Parliament raised the issue. "The government endorses the election of Amman's mayor and the members of the municipal council by direct suffrage," Dr. Majali said in his reply.

The importance of this suggestion lies in the fact that the population of the capital city makes up nearly one-third of the total population of the country. Given the fact that many aspects of Ammanites' lives are governed or affected by the policies of the municipality and its regulations, it would seem sensible to allow the people concerned an opportunity to express themselves on matters that affect them most. There is no effective way for the people to pronounce themselves on matters or measures that relate to them directly than by electing their mayor and representatives on the municipality council. The city ordinances and by-laws are still adopted without the residents directly having any opportunity to deliberate on them in an institutionalised manner. One can cite countless subjects on which Ammanites would want to discuss and adopt policies in a democratic manner. Besides, the spirit of democracy that we ushered in 1989 would remain shallow as long as the mayor of Amman and the members of its municipal council continue to be chosen administratively or politically without resorting to the ballot box. What exacerbates this issue is the fact that lesser cities and towns in the country enjoy a higher degree of democracy in the selection of their councilmen by conducting periodic elections. Since the prime minister has a green light on this, it becomes incumbent on Parliament itself to follow up on it, even if it has to amend the relevant laws.

A good way to conduct local elections for the capital city is to hold them simultaneously with the national elections for the Lower House of Parliament. That way, the cost would be kept to a minimum.

It is recommendable to hold concurrent elections for Parliament and local governments for Amman and elsewhere in the country for administrative and economic reasons, not to mention other practical factors that would make this option preferable. The main thing, though, is to close this gap immediately in our democratisation process by dealing with it in the most expeditious and affirmative manner possible.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

WHAT is happening inside the occupied Arab lands resembles a state of war, pitting the innocent population on the one hand and the Israeli forces and settlers on the other. Al Dustour daily said in its editorial Wednesday. The paper said that the Israelis, instead of implementing the Oslo deal for the autonomy rule, are escalating the tension and increasing the intensity of repression against the Palestinians. In the light of the continued atrocities against the Palestinians, one can rightly assume that any delay in the implementation of the Oslo accords was bound to step up tension and further exacerbate the situation, said the paper. Perhaps the Rabin government's procrastinations and delays were the main reason behind the escalation of violence at a time when the Arabs are losing hope and the Middle East peace process is hanging in the air. There is no doubt that the coming few days will witness further acts of violence and more confrontations, making it impossible for the peace process to take its course and even the Oslo deal to be implemented, concluded the daily.

A COLUMNIST in Al Ra'i discussed the short supply of water in Jordan, reflecting on the present situation in view of the lack of rain this winter. The rains of the past two days brought some hope not only to the farmers whose crops are in dire need of every drop, but rather for the whole nation, said Bader Abdul Haq. The writer said he hoped that the concerned authorities would launch a well-planned campaign aimed at encouraging the public to save water for domestic use, irrigation and industry. Noting that the Kingdom continues to face water shortages due to the increased needs of the growing population, the writer said every effort should be made to ensure sufficient supplies for the basic needs, while rationalisation of consumption ought to continue unabated. He said that despite the international agreements on sharing of water resources, the Israelis continue to steal Arab waters, depriving the country of its precious water and endangering its future. Indeed, water resources constitute a major wealth for the country and the backbone of the national economy, he added. For this reason, every citizen has the duty of helping to protect the country's water resources.

The U.S. role in Mideast peace: Time for a dramatic move

By Dr. Ahmad Majdoubeh

EVERY time the U.S. secretary of state comes to the region, he stirs the Middle East peace process a little. Whether one likes it or not, the American role as a whole seems to be essential not only in resuscitating the process itself each time it loses consciousness but also in achieving significant progress on key issues during the negotiations themselves. Since Madrid, both the bilaterals and the multilaterals have greatly benefited from direct Western, especially U.S., sponsorship, presence, and influence. Generally, the more efforts the American administration exerts and the more pressure it exercises, the more momentum the peace process undergoes.

The reverse is true. Whenever the U.S. detaches itself from or turns its back to the negotiations, the talks seem to either stall or noticeably slacken. This is true not only with respect to the Syrian-Israeli,

Lebanese-Israeli, and Jordanian-Israeli tracks, which are at present in a state of almost total suspension and disarray, but also the Palestinian-Israeli track which has taken a more promising but also perilous, risky, and dubious — course.

Ideally, the parties to the conflict themselves, the so-called children of Abraham, ought to be able, once the initial psychological barrier is broken (and indeed it has been) and once the peace process is launched, to sit down and settle the matter among themselves. Enough has happened since Madrid to make the parties comfortable enough, reasonable enough, and realistic enough to come to an agreement as to how to tackle the various thorny issues involved (though thorny and intricate they undeniably are) in a courageous, confident, orderly, and efficient manner. In the end, it is the inhabitants of the region itself, the children of Abraham, who have the most to gain or, God forbid, the most to lose. One

expects them, despite the immense obstacles that now exist, to learn to conduct their own business themselves, without outside help.

such expectation, however, seems to be at best wishful thinking and at worst impractical. For despite the pieces of good news one hears every once in a while, beginning with and throughout the aftermath of the Sept. 13 accord, the Middle East parties have generally failed to demonstrate their ability to work together and independently. As a matter of fact, they cannot seem to wean themselves from the so-called Western guardianship, particularly that of the U.S. This is a political fact which ought to be neither underestimated nor ignored, if any real progress in the peace process is to be made.

I have recently finished reading *Keeping Faith*, Jimmy Carter's both interesting and instructive account of the morphological history of the Camp David accords. To be sure, the

former U.S. president may have highlighted his own part in the overall drama a little more exaggeratedly than one would have hoped to see (after all he is the protagonist). He may have also stretched things a little, chopped off here and there a little and swept under the carpet a little. Nevertheless, I believe not only that he has mainly told the truth but also, more importantly, that he has offered a very workable and reliable strategy for dealing with complex conflicts, such as that of today's Middle East. We can learn a lot, I think, from the Camp David experience. Among other things, the book makes clear that no progress would have been made at Camp David without the full-time, direct involvement and the utter dedication of the senior U.S. officials, with Jimmy Carter as the spearhead. If Sadat and Begin were left to do the job themselves, they would have either failed to reach agreement or taken an incredibly long time to do so.

Secretary Christopher himself, during his recent visit, expressed his awareness of the vitality of the U.S. role when he referred to the U.S. as a "full partner" to end an "active participant" in the Middle East peace talks. Certainly, the spirit of what he has said is sound: the U.S. is and ought to be a fundamental player in the game. His claim, however, is not exactly correct, for regrettably, the U.S. has not lately been a "full" and "active" participant. Since the unfortunate stalemate in the bilateral, which used to convene in Washington under American auspices, the U.S. involvement, represented mainly by the secretary's visits to the area, has been intermittent and sporadic. And this is what perhaps, more than any other factor, has slowed the momentum of the process.

There is a lot, I am sure, on Bill Clinton's and Warren Christopher's mind at this point, a great many pressing domestic and international

affairs. But there is at present, I am equally sure, an excellent opportunity for both to do something everlasting and heroic in the Middle East, for the two men themselves, for America, for the children of Abraham, and for the world. The region's stability is as important for America's interests as it is for the interests of all the peoples of the region.

The way I see it, one of two things must be done, sooner than later: either a) for Clinton to step in Carter's shoes, invite the top Middle Eastern leaders and decision-makers to Washington or Camp David, and press for a speedy series of agreements on specific matters and tangible timetables with serious deadlines or b) for Christopher (not any other less high-ranking official) to make of the Middle East a permanent home for a while through real shuttle diplomacy, not sporadic social calls.

The time has come for America to take a more dramatic move.

Any room for dialogue still?

By Robert Fisk

The only United States marine to see the Muslim suicide bomber who blew up the marine barracks in Beirut in 1983 remembered just one thing about the man who slaughtered 241 of his comrades: he was smiling. Not long ago, I asked the Hizbollah leader, Hassan Nasrallah, if he could explain to me why a Muslim would smile as he drove to his death.

"The best metaphor for a Westerner to try to understand this truth is to think of a person being in a sauna bath for a long time," he replied to my astonishment. "This person is very thirsty and tired and hot, and he is suffering from the effects of the high temperature. Then he is told that if he opens the door, he can go into a quiet, comfortable room, drink a nice cocktail and hear beautiful classical music. Then he will open the door and go through without hesitation, knowing that what he leaves behind is not a high price to pay — and that what awaits him is of much greater value."

The sauna, the cocktail, classical music, these were the physical luxuries he might crave on earth. But the "quiet, comfortable room" was clearly heaven. Just open the door. Was it with such abandon that the boy martyrs of the Iraqi war drove their motor-scooters into Saddam's minefields? Or was it anger and frustration that motivated the young Lebanese who blew themselves up next to Israeli convoys in southern Lebanon? And if local conflicts can engender such ferocity, what are to be the consequences of the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia?

In Khartoum recently, Muslims — and several Christians — from 82 different countries have been asking this last question at a very unusual conference. Few came as official representatives of their governments. Jordanian Islamists, radicals from Algeria, Hizbol-

lah delegates from Lebanon, 50 parliamentarians from Yemen, even that ancient Marxist Nayef Hawatme of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine turned up to sit in Khartoum's ugly "Friendship Palace" to debate the future of Islam and to use the most oft-repeated phrase of the "victory and jihad of Muslims."

Needless to say, Sudan's "Popular Arab and Islamic conference" was going to be unpopular with both the West and the Arab regimes that support Washington. Even Saddam Hussein went no further than to dispatch his "adviser for religious affairs" to Khartoum for the occasion.

The gathering revealed unhappy realities as well as understandable fears within the Islamic world. At the opening session, a Nigerian woman doctor asked delegates to remember that Muslim women deserved just treatment and equality of opportunity under Islam. "Be fair to us," she pleaded in her short and moving address. But when Dr. Mustafa Ceric, the Imam of Sarajevo remarked that he hoped more women would speak at the conference, many of the Muslim delegates burst into laughter. Mr. Ceric, who has consistently demanded equality for all under the shell-fire of Sarajevo, glowered angrily.

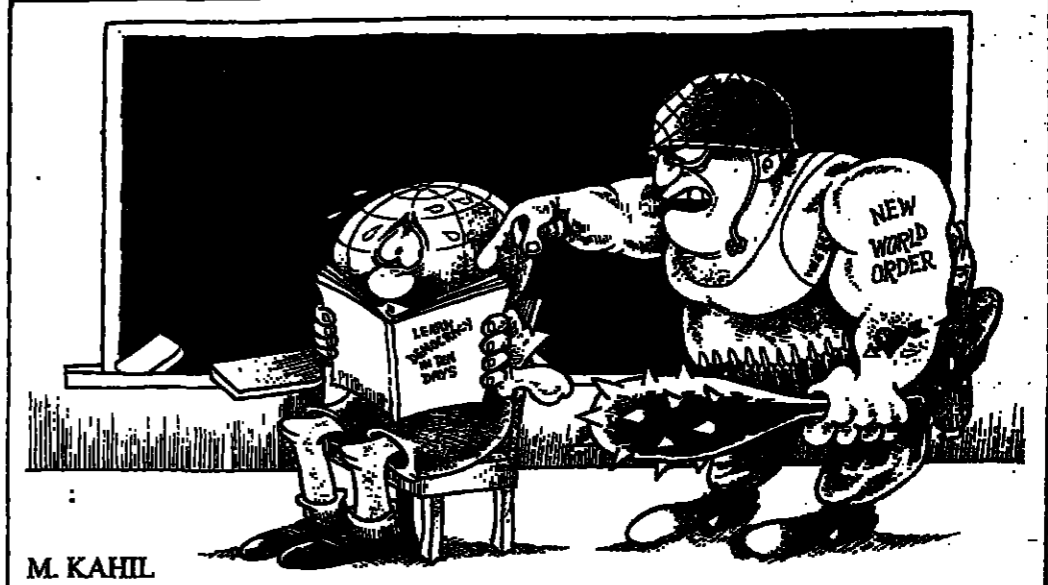
Nor were the Islamic movements in any mood to oblige Hassan Turabi, Sudan's ascetic spiritual "guide", by giving Yasser Arafat a hearing in Khartoum. The moment Hamas, Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine, Hizbollah and Mr. Hawatme heard of Mr. Turabi's plan to freight Mr. Arafat into Sudan for a reconciliation — or at least a "brotherly" discussion — about the Gaza-Jericho accord, they threatened to walk out of the conference. Mr. Arafat, once an ally of many of the men in the "Friendship Palace", took the hint and stayed away.

For the Khartoum conference demonstrated once again the enormous reservoir of suspicion and distrust of the West which is growing among so many Arab nations. Inevitably dubbed a "terrorists' conference" by the U.S. press — which faithfully and with equal inevitability took its cue from the remark of an Israeli official — the gathering was one of dissidents rather than subversives, of men (few women, of course) who believe that the PLO-Israeli accord is merely another chapter in the Muslim world's submission to the West.

Where else, after all, could such views find expression? Most Arab regimes suppress dissent, and Saudi Arabia's domination of the international Arab media has effectively deprived millions of Muslims of the opportunity for free debate. With only Egypt and Jordan allowing a modicum of free speech — and with the former's security services routinely torturing anyone suspected of involvement in armed opposition to the Mubarak regime — democracy is virtually non-existent in the Arab World.

In fairness, it should be said that there are Americans who prefer it this way. One prominent American journalist recently argued in the pages of a Washington journal that the Arab World should be obliged to observe human rights without being forced to adopt the basic principles of democracy. This pernicious idea — which denies that democracy is a human right — makes sense in the West. For if the Arab World were to allow its people free expression, how could it be relied upon to support the West and, by extension, peace with Israel?

Those Arab leaders who are allies of the West — President Mubarak, for example — have always urged their people to use the ballot box rather than the gun to change their governments. Yet when an Islamic party was about to win a



second round of elections in Algeria two years ago, the government suspended the poll and outlawed the probable victors — who turned to violence to achieve their ends and are now, of course, referred to as "terrorists."

"How dare the United States lecture us on peace and democracy?" One of the more moderate Palestinian delegates in Khartoum asked angrily. "How can they support regimes like Tunisia and Morocco and Algeria — and Egypt with all its human rights abuses — and all those feudal monarchies in the Gulf, and then accuse Sudan of being a 'terrorist' state that abuses human rights?" Repeatedly, the Muslims in Khartoum accepted the veracity of the so-called memorandum — an evident forgery — which is supposed to have been sent by Douglas Hurd to John Major and in which the Foreign Secretary purportedly opposed the creation of a Muslim state in Europe. This sham document, which circulates today in almost every Arab capital, is now given credibility in the Islamic world. In a clear reference to the forgery, General Mirza Aslam of Pakistan presented a paper to the conference in which he said "recently released (sic) European documents reveal plans to annihilate the Muslims in Bosnia."

Yet Arab Muslims may be forgiven for believing in this fabrication when international credibility — and in particular the authority of the United Nations — has become so eroded in the Islamic world. Offensive U.N. military action against armed Muslim groups in Somalia is acceptable to the West. Offensive military action against those who kill Muslims in Bosnia is unacceptable. Even when Arab nations have sent their own troops on peacekeeping missions to the Balkans, they have been constrained by the U.N. There is no evidence that the Egyptian battalion in Sarajevo or the Jordanian battalion north of the Sava river have saved a single Muslim life.

But of greatest portent were those voices — sometimes incoherent, always rhetorical, invariably angry — which sought to define what could not be discussed elsewhere; the idea that Muslims must decide their own future without interference from the West or from Arab leaders friendly with the West. "Don't you see that we can't say what we think if we are in our own countries and can't read what we think even if we buy a newspaper?" another Palestinian complained. "We are told to be democratic in countries which

aren't democratic. If we oppose American plans for the region or Arafat's submission to Israel, we are called 'enemies of peace'. And if we take up arms because we have no other means to express ourselves or if we die for our religion, we are called 'terrorists'."

I suspect that Mr. Ceric, the Imam of Bosnia, was thinking along the same line when I came across him in the lobby of the Hilton hotel. Last summer, when we met under bombardment in Sarajevo, he had vouchsafed his belief that the Christian West despised the Muslims who lived peacefully among them but that Muslims and Christians must maintain a dialogue without mutual recrimination. Now, in Khartoum, his attitude was less patient. Dialogue was no longer enough, he said. Muslims had to assert their identity and force the West to listen. "Our civilisations must talk to each other — but directly. We must be honest with each other. Up to now, we have tried to be nice and said to each other: 'Let's live together'. That was very pleasant. But now we must be very honest and speak straight out about our problems, not just as human beings but as Muslims."

It was a statement; but it was also a warning.

A whiff of U.S. imperialism

By Adrian Hamilton

THE GATT negotiations are becoming increasingly like the Maastricht debate: having failed to win the hearts and minds of men with the vision if agreement is reached, its proponents are now trying to terrify them with the cataclysm that will occur if it fails.

They are exaggerating. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade is generally reckoned a "good thing" in economic terms and certainly more devoutly to be wished for than Maastricht. But, like Maastricht, the politics are turning of the rising fear of untrammelled free trade at a time of recession.

What was meant to be a further mile along the road of international liberalism is increasingly being seen as a stick by which the United States hopes to beat the world into economic submission.

This is partly a matter of style. Mickey Kantor, the U.S. Trade Representative, is a feisty fellow who knows how to scare his opponents in the last hand of the poker game.

But it is also a matter of substance. President Bill Clinton is no free trader. He showed that in the election. But he does profoundly believe that U.S. foreign policy needs to be both more directly responsive to domestic needs in

general and to America's economic needs in particular. Ensuring trade has replaced ensuring peace as the U.S.'s primary aim.

That may seem harmless enough in principle. But in practice it has meant an American administration that has gone around the world demanding import access for its goods while resorting to fierce anti-dumping measures when it doesn't get its way.

The Europeans are lectured for worrying about their farmers. The Japanese are told that, not only must they reduce tariffs on certain goods, but they must guarantee American import penetration as a percentage of individual sectors. It may look good to the steel workers of the mid-West and the entertainment industry of California, but it looks suspiciously like economic imperialism to those outside.

At the same time, President Bill Clinton has embarked on a series of regional free trade initiatives inherited from his predecessor which he has now represented as expressions of America's global ambitions and grim warnings for those who do not fall into line. The North American Free Trade Area is proclaimed almost as an extension of the Monroe doctrine that would have Latin

America as an U.S. economic fiefdom, while Asia is hailed back from forming independent trade areas and told it must be a Pacific area that includes the U.S.

"President Bill Clinton is no free trader. He showed that in the election."

This vision of the world as divided into great trade blocs is disturbing enough. It may fit the formula for the European Community of the seventies, but it bares little relation to the way that Asia, with the grumbling emergence of China and the problems of Japan, is going. Nor does it even reflect Europe post-Maastricht.

It is all very well presenting Asia as the competitive menace before which Europe must bow, but tell that to Asia's powerhouse, Japan, which is experiencing the worst recession since the War and

faces the prospect of abandoning its "jobs for life" policy.

The truth is that there are common problems to all mature economies just as there are with emerging ones. There is a shift of traditional and less skilled industries to lower labour cost countries in South East Asia. There is a huge shake-out of service and ancillary white-collar staff due to the information revolution.

But it is not a problem between trading blocs as such. Nor is it any justification for telling European politicians to stop concentrating on Europe and look to the East or West. Europe's primary task remains how to help and encompass the former Eastern bloc countries. If it can do that, it can do quite nicely thank you.

It is only the bloc mentality beloved of Americans and retired British diplomats which would have you believe that concentrating on your own region excludes reaching out for others, or that bringing in new partners is somehow an exclusive process.

If GATT is to mean anything, it should be to break down this two-dimensional view of the world in favour of multilateralism. As it is, the negotiations are being conducted in quite the opposite spirit — The Observer.

LETTERS

Israeli blunders

Letter to the Editor

PALESTINIANS have every reason to get alarmed and to protest at the systematic destruction of archaeological sites around Jericho by 40 Israeli teams led by General Amir Drori, who is practicing a scorched-earth policy. In 1982, he was responsible for the Sabra and Chatila massacre and for plundering archaeological sites in Sidon.

It is a well-known fact that excavations conducted without consideration to methodical work will cause the loss of archaeological sites forever. Modern archaeology is based on careful study of each stratum to obtain important information on the historical continuity of its occupation.

What the Israelis are doing now in this area that is believed to be the cradle of early humans amounts to vandalism; blundering and total destruction of the long history that goes back one and a half million years.

Before 1967, Jordanian archaeologists rescued the Dead Sea scrolls, which were exhibited in Jerusalem and Amman museums. Biblical archaeologists from all over the world have always been allowed to excavate in Palestine and Jordan, and their work has been widely published. Our scholars have always cooperated with foreign archaeologists in documenting and conserving archaeological sites important to human culture.

It is not a secret that some Israeli generals have grown rich by plundering archaeological sites in the occupied territories and have gathered archaeological artifacts worth millions of dollars.

It is the responsibility of all those who are interested in protecting human history to protect Israeli destruction of precious sites.

Ghazi Saudi
President
Friends of Archaeology,
Amman.

Victims of oppression fear normalisation

By Mohammad Masharga

Apprehension, frustration and escape towards slogans and wishful thinking were the main features that characterised dialogues conducted by Arab thinkers and intellectuals taking part in the Arab cultural unity seminar held in Amman this week.

Organised by the Federation of Arab Writers, the seminar was attended by delegates from Jordan, Palestine, Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Iraq, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. The aim of the seminar was to find ways of confronting the dangers and the challenges facing the Arab culture in the light of the enormous developments of the past few years, particularly the PLO-Israeli deal and prospects for peace as a result of the Arab-Israeli negotiations.

Dangers inherent in the prospects of cultural normalisation with Israel and the so-called Middle East Common Market dominated most of the discussions of the meeting which included reviews of researches and studies conducted by Arab intellectuals who represented the various "national romantic" trends.

According to Dr. Raja' Abu Ghazaleh, a known Jordanian writer and artist the Middle Eastern market represented a harbinger of a "complete" occupation of the Arab mind and status and constitutes a serious threat to Arab cultural unity.

The participants called on Arab intellectuals to adopt a collective Arab cultural stand and reaffirm Arab culture vis-a-vis the Western-culture. Dr. Abu Ghazaleh said that Arab writers ought to help spread the principled national and pan-Arab stands which, she noted, ought to be made to deal with what she called, the consumerist mentality of the Arab individual.

Another participant, Dr. Hussein Jumaa, warned against the trend towards isolationism on the part of Arab countries and falling victim to the illusion of various cultures.

Dr. Jumaa, who teaches Arabic literature at the University of Jordan said that one has to differentiate between the humanistic and the other forms of Western cultures designed and employed to distort Arab culture, describing such culture as corrupt and capitalist in nature and obstructing man's progress.

A debate on "opening Arab minds or closing them to external cultures" was a reminder of the general situation prevailing in the past five decades during which the Arabs failed to realise the developments and enormous cultural and political changes that occurred during these decades. Indeed, the same concepts prevailing then are being reproduced at present depicting the present Arab cultural situation.

Falling back to the start of the 20th century we find the Arab intellectuals and thinkers divided into the following three groups:

AMMAN CULTURAL PULSE

1— A group favouring rejection of anything emanating from the European culture and contentment with only the Islamic heritage "which is useful for any time and place."

2— A group advocating total openness to Western culture which they claim would help end the present Arab weakness and decadence as advocated by secularist figures like Taha Hussein and Salameh Mousa.

3— A group favouring centrism and moderation calling for openness to what is only useful in the Western culture like science, technology and the political democratic system. This group however rejects the Western concepts of values and philosophy which constitute a basis for the Western culture. Among the advocates of such trend are Rifaat Tahtawi, Khairuddin Basha, Jamal Eddin Al Afghani and Mohammad Abdo.

In following the dialogues over Arab culture I came to

realise that the writers and the intellectuals of the Arab World earlier this century had dealt with deeper and more important questions related to culture and had exerted more serious efforts in their endeavours than the writers of our day.

It was because the participants preferred to speak in general terms about culture that nobody was clear about the concept of Arab cultural unity. Was it a unity of the constituent components of culture (science, literature, art, politics, sociology etc.), or a unity of various constituent units of culture (Latin cultures, ancient cultures etc.)

In addition, the participants have failed to define the concept of culture itself. Some preferred to link it to heritage and others attributed it to ways of living and still others connected it to an "intellectual product."

It seemed to me that the organisers of the seminar have preferred to avoid clarification of the seminar's theme and were satisfied by calling for the discussions in order to conduct a study on the concept of cultural unity versus the challenges facing the Arab culture in general.

Most of the proposals put forward as a way of rescuing Arab culture from isolationism and eventual demise, were heavily characterised by romantic ideologies, and demagogical slogans. Some participants tried to benefit from the historic experiments in a bid to promote Arab cultural development, noting that Arab culture lived a golden era when it maintained close contacts with the foreign cultures and that in the Abbasid era Arab culture had rivalled any other contemporary culture as it dealt with all fields of knowledge. That Arab culture of the past represented an important link in the human intellectual chain, producing a conventional culture by all standards.

One can safely conclude that in its confrontation with the other cultures, the Arab culture was able to safeguard its identity and protect its integrity. But most importantly, the Arab culture has been able to provide a fertile background for continual dialogue and also

points of difference and agreement.

The Iraqi writer Abdul Zahrah Zaki and his Palestinian colleague Ghazi Al Khalili were in agreement over the point that the issue for the Arab intellectual and Arab culture emanates from within the Arab nation and is rather Arab in nature.

They maintain that the basic conditions for cultural confrontation with foreign cultures are represented in freedom and democracy, something which begins with the preparedness to accept the principle of co-existence, political pluralism and cultural and intellectual pluralism.

Abdul Zahrah Zaki called on Arab regimes to re-examine their information, educational and cultural systems and to involve the intellectuals in drawing up and planning cultural programmes. He said intellectuals can only participate in such endeavour if they work in an atmosphere of freedom so that their minds can be creative.

Algerian researcher Ahmad Minwer argues that it is not possible for any one to stop the flow of informational and cultural materials from the Western countries through television. Therefore, he calls for inter-Arab cooperation for the production of sufficient and high quality television cultural programmes to meet the needs of the Arab viewers.

Though the proposal is well meant, one can say that it would not be practicable because of political and material considerations on the part of governments and commercial firms.

He says that recommendations for the creation of committees to fight off the Arab cultural normalisation with Israel would be pointless. He suggests that the Arab writers dedicate their meetings towards improving the quality of cultural material and for spreading awareness among the Arab public against Israel's culture. Only through proper and creative tools of culture can the Arab nation's culture be safeguarded and can the Arab culture be enhanced.

Future empress Masako lives life of recluse

By Didier Fangeux
Agence France Presse

TOKYO — Six months after her marriage to Japan's crown prince, former diplomat Princess Masako has been unable to shake off the old-fashioned image of the imperial family as some had hoped, and lives the life of a recluse.

After a long silence imposed by the ultra-conservative imperial palace agency, Princess Masako met briefly with the media this week to mark her 30th birthday and answered several banal questions through a chamberlain.

"I feel as if I have spent these six months, especially the first two or three after the wedding, totally absorbed in daily affairs," she said in response to journalists' comments that her appearances in public had become increasingly rare.

Prince Naruhito, 33, heir to the chrysanthemum throne, created a sensation with his marriage on June 9 to diplomat Masako. A commoner but well-educated and cosmopolitan, she was flamboyant when compared with the timidity of the self-effacing young women typical of Japanese high

society.

Eldest daughter of career diplomat Hisashi Owada, Japanese ambassador to the United Nations, Princess Masako grew up in Moscow, New York and Boston, where her father had postings. She joined the Foreign Ministry in 1987.

Since her marriage, Princess Masako has been under the total control of the imperial palace, which changed her fashionable wardrobe for one of more innocuous style, as exhibited by the choice of a conservative suit in the official photograph published by the press recently.

At the time of the prince's marriage, the influential daily Asahi Shimbun expressed concerns that Princess Masako would be stifled by the imperial palace, even though she would have made a fine ambassador for Japan.

"She is brimming with intelligence and charm now," Asahi said at the time.

"But if her attractiveness is to end up in smiling 'royal smiles' in a reserved manner, the crown prince's choice will not have been a good one."

An observer of the imperial court confirmed those

fears, saying: "If she does not stand up to them now, the retrograde bureaucrats of the imperial palace will orchestrate her every move for the rest of her life."

The recent entanglement of Empress Michiko with the press has undoubtedly encouraged the court bureaucrats to tighten their grip on the royal couple.

The empress has been unable to speak until recently since falling ill at the palace Oct. 20, though she was able to celebrate her 59th birthday.

Several days before her illness, the empress was said to be "distressed and con-

fused" by the articles, which said in part that she was tyrannical with lowly palace staff.

Princess Masako came to the defence of her mother-in-law.

"The empress has been a very good advisor on whatever has concerned me and has been a great strength to me," she said.

But the question on everyone's lips — whether the princess is pregnant — remains unanswered.

"Out of discretion we don't bring up such topics to the royal couple," a close aide to the prince said.



Princess Masako

After 5,000 years, Chinese start to slim

By Mark O'Neill
Reuters

BEIJING — In July, Zhang Yan opened a restaurant where fat people like himself could eat in peace, away from the slights of a society where for the first time in 5,000 years slim is beautiful.

The restaurant is one of many signs that dieting has finally arrived in China's cities, spawning an industry worth millions of dollars in special foods, slimming tea and medicines.

"If you look back 20 years, to be fat was considered a sign of wealth and power," said Zhang, who weighs in at 96 kg (200 lb).

"But now, with everyone eating much better, to be slim is considered beautiful and fat people feel embarrassed."

Men over 94 kg (195 lb) and women over 83 kg (170 lb) get a 15 per cent discount for meals at Zhang's restaurant called Fei Fei (Fei means fat or fertile), not only for themselves but for the group they bring with them.

"What a change," said a 40-year-old cab driver. "When I was a teenager in the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), we had no rice, meat or vegetables. I was always hungry. Now many people want to lose weight as they think it will make

them beautiful."

At one counter at Guizhou, Beijing's newest department store, a woman in her 50s has just spent 528 yuan (\$93) on six packets of Guo's special nutritious food, which promises a loss of five kg (10 lb) in 10 days.

It is mixed with boiling water and eaten three times a day with fruit and vegetables — but no rice, meat or sweets. It is named after its inventor, a Beijing professor called Guo.

"No, I do not think it is too expensive," said the plump lady purchaser. "I find it effective and with no side effects. If you work out the money you save on food, it does not cost

more."

The counter also offers a slimming stick which looks like chocolate. Eat this instead of regular food, and its makers claim weight will be lost. One bottle with 180 pieces costs 76 yuan (\$13.3). A second version, made sweeter to appeal to Western tastes, costs 110 yuan (\$19).

Or how about slimming tea? The Feiyuan brand is named for a beauty centuries ago said to have been so light she could dance on the emperor's hand. It costs 23 yuan (\$4) and tastes just like ordinary tea but claims to painfully cut that unnecessary fat.

The official average

monthly urban income in China is 190 yuan (\$33), though Beijing people earn substantially more.

"Young women buy up to 20 packets at a time and drink it every day," the salesman said. "When it comes to slimming, people look at the effect not at the price."

This kind of demand has spawned an industry with about 2,000 heavily advertised factories in China producing special foods, with annual sales of 2.5 billion yuan (\$439 million).

Market leader is the Wa-Ha group of Hangzhou, famous for its nutritious milk-like drink and its theme song, repeated so

often on radio and television that millions can sing it.

But Yang Qinghui, head of a department treating obesity at Beijing Medical University, said many health food products make false claims and do not explain their ingredients.

"They should be scientifically tested and approved by the Ministry of Health," Mr. Yang said. "Many have unwelcome side-effects."

Mr. Yang says the best way to lose weight is a mixture of a low-calorie diet, exercise, qi gong (breathing exercises) and acupuncture, conducted under medical supervision. Many single children are

smothered with food from six people — mother and father and four grandparents. There are special classes where these children can go to slim.

Some think their leaders could also benefit from dieting.

President Jiang Zemin, for example, has put on a lot of weight since becoming head of the Communist Party in 1989.

"The leaders nowadays live too well and have too many banquets," said one taxi driver. "Jiang does not seem to like exercise, maybe he is too busy."

Chairman Mao used to smoke a lot, yes, but he loved swimming. The lead-

ers of those days had a simpler lifestyle and kept slimmer," he said. Mao is said to have swum across the Yangtze 13 times between 1956 and 1966.

Restaurant owner Zhang said he had tried everything to get slim, including exercise and dieting, but to no avail.

"I would not have him any other way," said his slender wife, who is just half his size. "We both eat what we want. My husband is a big meat-eater. He likes what I cook for him."

"She dreamed of marrying a big man and now she is happy," Zhang said. "So am I. I always dreamt of marrying a slim wife."

Book tells how snoopers' stupidity caused tragedy and laughter

By Bernard Edinger
Reuters

PARIS — Official snooping into private correspondence as a long history in France and in the 20th century it remains a political hot potato in spite of laws meant to curb its abuse.

The opening of mail began in the 17th century under King Louis XIII, and an outburst by a notable in the re-revolutionary times illustrates the general view: "I'd rather dine with the public executioner than with the inspector of royal posts."

These hundred years later, controversy over its modern equivalent of telephone tapping refuses to die down despite strict laws designed to ensure its use is

confined to espionage and drug cases.

The office of President Francois Mitterrand, whose electoral promises included a pledge to curb snooping, was this year itself accused of conducting illegal wiretaps.

A book just published shows the extraordinary extent to which the 1940-1944 collaborationist Vichy government spied on the French people.

Initially conducted for Vichy's own benefit between 1940 and 1942, when Marshal Philippe Petain's puppet government ruled a "non-occupied zone" covering most of southern France, the snooping continued for the benefit of the German occupiers of the rest of France until 1944.

often with tragic results.

"Secret Conversations Of The French Under The Occupation" by historian Antoine Lefebvre is based on official archives and shows Vichy officials read up to two million letters a month in 1942.

The snooping by hundreds of specially appointed officials and policemen helped track down resistance fighters and political refugees.

About 3,000 people were dragged before Vichy courts in July 1941 alone as a result of indiscreet statements in letters or telephone calls.

Among the most tragic examples was that of two Dutch women who sought refuge in southern France. Their telephone conversa-

tion in their native tongue was interrupted by an operator demanding they speak French.

Their reply in French to the operator that she would not be performing such a task if France had not been humiliatingly crushed by Germany was noted and sent to police who recommended the women be arrested, a first step towards the Nazi death camps.

Lefebvre's book also shows the depth of French public antipathy to Germany, already strong as a result of World War I, even among Vichy sympathisers equally hostile to Britain.

Inevitably, many letters complain of food shortages and the general hardships of wartime life, including the

forcible separation of couples.

There are references to events which post-war authorities wanted to forget. Among them were allied bombing raids which went wrong, including one on a north Paris railway marshalling yard in early 1944 in which nearly 500 Parisians living nearby were killed and 2,000 wounded.

A Red Cross nurse who went to the site of a 1943 British bombing of a Renault car works, in which up to 600 civilians may have been killed in nearby neighbourhoods, wrote:

"The raid was particularly lethal... not for the Germans who sheltered in their bunkers but for local residents killed in their beds or in the street. I spent the

night extracting the bodies of 20 young children from a cellar."

Grim consequences of nearly a million young Frenchmen being held prisoners in Germany for five years are demonstrated by a letter home from a prisoner who says he saw messages to two of his comrades from their wives saying:

"1. Don't bother coming back. I'm living with your brother. I'll keep the youngest but I've given the other children to your mother."

"2. Take it as you will but I'm seven months pregnant."

Another man received a letter containing a picture of his wife at a cafe terrace with a German soldier. The book turns up unflat-

tering evidence about a firm which, then as now, was France's leading automatic photo booth maker.

It wrote to Vichy authorities touting for business as they began rounding up Jews, who were later handed to the Nazis.

"The detention of Jewish individuals will presumably entail new administrative documents needing identity photos. May we draw your attention to our machines which can photograph a thousand people in six hours and save time and money," it said.

The firm's current director wrote to newspapers last month saying the company felt deep shame at the incident.

Disclosures about illicit snooping by the govern-

ment today have taken place in less grim circumstances and even led to some national belly laughs.

Transcripts of wiretaps leaked to the newspapers Le Monde and Liberation earlier this year suggested security men at the Elysee Presidential Palace had ordered a tap on the telephone of model-turned-actress Carole Bouquet, among others.

According to press accounts never officially denied, the taps were ordered by a senior Mitterrand aide whose interest in Bouquet was more amorous than official.

Red-faced officials said they would investigate the case but little has since been heard of the probe.

Games without frontiers

By Jean-Claude Elias

Playtime is not a matter to be taken lightly. Its importance, the part it occupies in our life, its nature and its impact on our physical and mental health have been widely discussed and extensively debated. Some would work hard to earn their days of leisure. Others would play and relax in order to better work afterwards. Whatever the approach, the philosophy or the purpose, we all play sometime, somehow.

It is therefore no surprise that the widespread usage of personal computers (PC) brought with it a whole world of computer games. Rules, repetitive patterns, logic and a "win-lose" outcome are the basic constituents of all games. This structure makes them perfectly programmable on a computer.

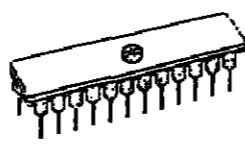
The huge profits reaped by designers and programmers of software games are enormous and reflect the importance of the part they occupy in the life of the average PC user. Computer games come in all shapes and colours. There is hardly a sport that has not been programmed, from basket ball to tennis, golf and soccer. Though the quality of such programmes is truly amazing in terms of colours, graphics, animation, sound and overall realism, I still cannot figure out the pleasure one can take at hitting a ball in the warm comfort of an armchair, with a plastic joystick in hand. Although I consider myself a "computer person", I still miss the open air, the dust and the sweat of the real thing.

Simulation games however, whether sports or others, are not necessarily the most popular ones. There is a whole array of smart games that have been specifically designed on and for computers. They would only run on PCs and have no real-life equivalent. Ever heard of the famous Carmen Sandiego series for instance? They are detective games that require patience, ingenuity and imagination. A set can last several hours or... days.

Even those with an allergy to PCs (any such species left?) have heard of Tetris. Invented by a young Russian programmer five or six years ago, this action game is probably the most popular of them all. Various shapes keep falling from the top of the screen at different speeds and from different heights. The player must make sure they are sorted and placed next to each other so that they form continuous lines at the bottom of the screen. For that he can only rotate or move them to the left or to the right while they are falling. Contrary to Carmen Sandiego the rules here are extremely simple and have certainly contributed to the success of Tetris.

Naturally chess, poker, monopoly, car racing, billiards etc... have all been adapted to computer, some of them even come in different versions.

chip talk



It is impossible in a few lines to give even an overview of the existing PC games. Their consequences however have been past the simple "entertainment" initial purpose.

First of all, they have been the main carriers of PC viruses. What is the best (and easiest, not to say the cheapest) way to please a friend? Giving him a copy of your new computer game of course. Virus originators have realised that and used it as their surest means of transmitting the "disease."

Games can occupy a lot of disk space, as much as five or ten MB (one MB = one megabyte = 1 million characters). Programmes like Bart Simpson Vs The Mutants, Carmen Sandiego or the last version of the Flight Simulator will eat up your disk before you know it. To really enjoy an advanced game, you also need an excellent high resolution SVGA colour monitor and an additional sound system.

Apart from disk space, viruses and expensive options, the most controversial issue related to computer games has been the negative effect on the young minds. Some specialists and psychologists have found that teenagers or pre-teens who spend hours staring at a screen, concentrating at a game can develop serious nerves-related problems, sometimes leading to epilepsy. The causality is still to be scientifically proven.

Time will certainly and naturally filter the huge number of available games. There will be rejects and of course survivors. Those that fall in the "educational" category stand the best chance.

Perhaps the most significant and funny feature of some games is the Escape key, a keytop of the PC keyboard. If you're in the office, playing, and your boss enters, quickly pressing the Escape key will temporarily erase the game from the screen displaying a very business-like (but dummy) sheet of figures, showing how serious you are at work. Once your boss is away, pressing the Escape again will restore the game exactly where you left it. The boss however need not worry, no one will check on him playing!

Joha and his son

By E. Yaghi

NO one can please everybody all the time; few can please anybody even some of the time. Although the stories of Joha may prove to be too simple for the readers of the Jordan Times, there is always a grain of truth in even the seemingly ludicrous. A case in point is the time when one day Mr. Joha decided to go to a neighbouring village to see about selling some of his vegetables. His small six-year-old son begged, "please, daddy, take me with you!"

Joha peered benevolently down at his pride and joy and replied, as he tousled the child's hair while smiling: "It's a long way to the village for a small guy like you. Perhaps when you grow a bit bigger and know how to handle a donkey, then we will think about it."

But he couldn't bear to see the boy so crestfallen so he hollered to his wife: "Get the child ready. I'm taking him with me!"

Presently, after throwing an old empty guinea sack over the back of his best donkey, Joha yelled to the youth, "come on son, let's get going!"

The day was still infant and smelled like the odor of jasmine and ripe wheat. Just before departing, Joha's wife handed her husband a bundle which contained as she stated, "some bread, olives, and fresh laban to help you on your way in case you two men get hungry."

Naturally, he also remembered to grab his rough-feeling black goatskin of water before departing for, as any experienced traveller knows, man can live far longer without food than the former. He gently lifted his son up and heaved him over on the donkey's back and whistled a tune as he led the beast and child towards the road to the village. It was not long before he met one of his neighbours, who greeted him with, "well, hello Joha! Where are you going so early in the morning?"

The father replied, "I'm heading for the village to see about a market for my vegetables."

"Is that so? But tell me friend, why do you have your son riding while you, an older man are walking? What is

the world coming to when the son rides and his father must walk?"

Too easily swayed by others opinions, the embarrassed parent replied as he stroked his wiry black beard: "you know, you are right. There is no respect for elders these days. Get down son and let your father ride."

Obviously satisfied, the neighbour left the pair on the road and the two continued on their journey. This time, the boy led the brown donkey which was rather a difficult feat for a child of his age, but the beast proved patient in spite of the boy's father being a bit dense. Not too much later, a stranger approached the two, and in a tone of stern admonishment said, "why, my dear sir, how can you be so cruel to ride while your small son walks? Have you no conscience?"

All the father could answer with some confusion was, "well, I guess you're quite right," and jumped off the donkey. The stranger, apparently satisfied with immediate results, continued on his way, but Joha found himself really in a muddle. He looked at the boy as if searching for wisdom in his innocence but what solution could so small a person have to offer so he mumbled to himself: "If my son rides and I walk, then children have no respect for their elders, but if I ride and my son walks, then I am cruel and inconsiderate. What am I to do now, carry the donkey on my shoulders?"

However, he did nothing of the kind, (though he was slightly tempted), for he did not have the strength to do so. But he trudged along the remainder of the way down the dusty highway, holding his son's hand and leading a burdenless donkey. People who passed laughed and smirked at the foolish couple and said, "look how stupid that man is, leading a donkey and a child. At least if either the father or his son rode while the other walked it would look better!" Through the whole experience Joha learned one thing and that is he couldn't really please anyone at all no matter how he tried. Unfortunately, he did not have the perception, common sense, self-confidence nor intelligence to think for himself and take affirmative action which he believed right.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

By Mohammad A. Shuqair

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

- ★ A shawl made of special material that resists water is worn by ladies walking under heavy rain.
- ★ Now available on markets a brush inside which there is soap. When pressed lotion comes out of its hairs. Barbers using it to save much of their time.
- ★ A male tiger often weighs 300 kg whereas the female tiger's weight doesn't exceed 150 kg.
- ★ A device was especially made to unsew stitches —without causing any damage to the material. It can be fixed to ordinary sewing-machines very easily.
- ★ P.T. Barnum was the first man to organise a circus show in America in 1871. He was 60 at the time.

TIME FOR RIB-TICKLING READING CHATTERBOXES

(A chatterbox is a person who engages in much idle talk)

- She's a constant source of earritation.
- The smaller his ideas, the more words he uses to express them.
- Her mouth is so big, it takes her fifteen minutes to get her lipstick on.
- He thinks by the inch and talks by the yard, until you feel like removing him by the foot.
- He's a specialist in monologues.
- Where she's concerned, one word leads to another 10,000.
- She's the kind of woman who would be enormously improved by laryngitis.
- He's as gabby as a barber.
- As a conversationalist he's inimitable and ilimitable.

SAY IT IN ARABIC

AT THE HOTEL

- Good evening, sir. Masa'ul khair, sayyidi.
- I want a single room with a bath. Ureed ghurfah monfarida wa hammam.
- For how many days, please? Likam youm, raja'an? — For three days. Lithalathit ayyam.
- We have a first floor room. Indana ghurfah fit'tabik al-awwal.
- The room overlooks a garden and main street. Al-ghurfah totill ala hadika wa shari' ra'cesi.
- This room is too wide and too noisy. Hazih ghurfah wasi'a jiddan wa muz'ija jiddan.
- Is there a telephone in the room? Hal yoojad telephone fil-ghurfah? — It is very cold. I want a blanket. El-donia bard. Ureed battaniya.
- The hot water tap doesn't work. Hanafiyet el-maa assakhin la taamal.
- At what time is breakfast? Ma maw'id ta'am el-ifar.

HUMOUR

- JUDGE: What were you doing at the shop? THIEF: I was buying a box of sweet. JUDGE: Why did you break the safe open? THIEF: To place the price of the sweet-box!!
- On the train. MOTHER: I warned you many a time not to throw the banana peels on the ground. SON: Yes, mother. I always carry out what you say. MOTHER: Well, where are the peels of the bananas you've just eaten? SON: I put them in the pocket of the man sitting beside me.

☆☆☆☆

- A BUTCHER asked one of the lawyers in London: "Would the dog's owner be held responsible if his dog robbed a piece of meat?"

LAWYER: "Sure, my dear."

BUTCHER: "That's very nice. Your dog snatched a beefsteak worth half a pound 5 minutes ago."

LAWYER: "Then give me the remaining half of the pound. In this way, I would have been paid all my fees in return for this consultation."

COOKING IS FUN

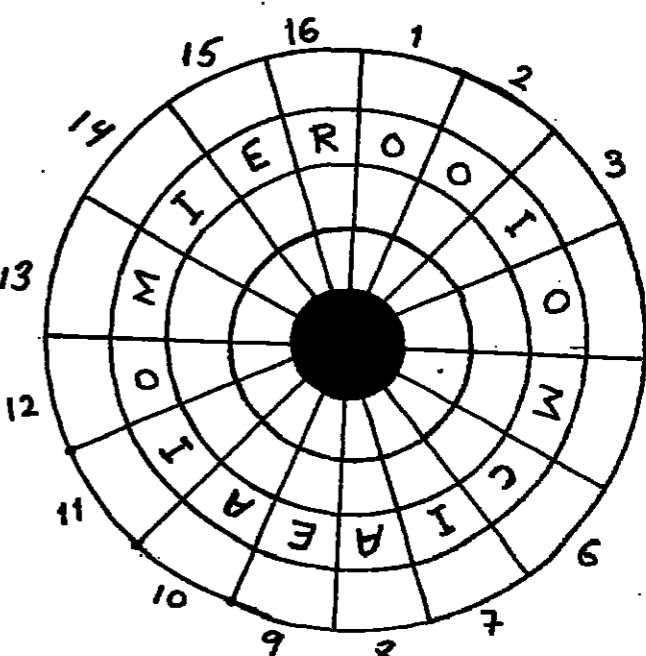
TURKISH COFFEE

In Lebanon, Syria and Jordan, Turkish coffee is served, always in small cups. It is brewed in varying styles and with different degrees of sweetness. A good hostess still takes real pride in the quality of the coffee that is offered in her home. In public places or business offices you can order it to your taste. It can be MURRAH (bitter), SUKKAR ALIL (little sugar) or MAZBOOT (just right).

But whatever your preference and no matter where you are, at the office or at home, among the rich or the humble, in a remote village or the bustle of a town office, you can always count on a cup of coffee, the one unfailing sign that the guest is still esteemed and honoured in the Arab World.

PUZZLES

Each number outside the circle carries a four-letter word. Only one letter is mentioned to help you solve the puzzle. When you finish filling all the gaps in the circle, re-arrange the letters surrounding the black circle to get the name of black American leader and a civil rights advocate.



Here are the clues:

1. Wonder aimlessly.
2. German politician.
3. Capital of Peru.
4. Afrikaner.
5. An Arab prince.
6. Pain.
7. Place where legal coinage is manufactured.
8. Contemporary American poet.
9. A Biblical king.
10. A Muslim judge.
11. Furnace for baking pots and bricks and for drying wood.
12. Painful disease of the joints.
13. Unhealthy dark mixture of gases.
14. Sheet of ice for skating.
15. Prefix meaning "half".
16. English architect, astronomer and mathematician.

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Thursday, Dec. 16

- 8:30 Family Matters
- 9:10 Reasonable Doubts
- 10:00 News In English
- 10:20 Movie Of The Week — Seagulls Fly Low

Friday, Dec. 17

- 8:30 E.N.G.
- True Patriot Love

Mike's worries this time happen outside Channel 10 by looking for his missing daughter, he gets into unexpected troubles.

- 9:30 Faces And Places
- 10:00 News In English
- 10:20 Night Of Courage
- A two-part drama series about prejudice against colour and race in the United States. A young Mexican pays dearly for falling in love with a white young girl.

Saturday, Dec. 18

- 8:30 The Fanelli Boys
- Dominique is convincing Frank to sue a hockey team for being hit by a flying ball during a game!
- 9:00 Da Beat's On
- 9:30 Perspectives
- 10:00 News In English
- 10:20 Feature Film — Bird On A Wire

Starring: Mel Gibson and Goldie Hawn

An eye witness becomes an FBI agent. His mission: To track down a drug dealer, whose identity comes as a shock to all.

Sunday, Dec. 19

- 8:30 You Bet Your Life
- 9:10 Thirty-min. thing



E.N.G. Friday at 8:30

- The Haunting Of A.A.A.
- Miles is asking too much of Michael. To look at his creative team and see who is expendable. This proves an extremely hard task for Michael.
- 10:00 News In English
- 10:20 The Men Who Killed Kennedy

The Patsy

The Patsy traces back Oswald's life, since he joins the Marine Corp. till his alleged assassination of President Kennedy.

- 11:10 The Golden Palace
- Seems Like Old Time

It is reconciliation time. The four girls have an open talk. They have been unintentionally hurt by each other!

Monday, Dec. 20

- 8:30 Delta
- Our Divorce
- Delta lets us into her private life. ...and an encounter with her divorced husband, Charlie.
- 9:10 The House Of Eliott
- For the two sisters, it is the day of the big show...

The story of the two young brothers and their sister who, after the death of their mother, try to escape the ruthless and greedy uncle and his wife.

- spoiled and marred only by public accusations by Yolande...
- 10:00 News In English
- 10:20 The Guilty

Eddie is being followed by the police, believing he is Nicky's killer. His consolation, however, is to find the truth from his father.

11:10 The Sleeping Beauty

The Wedding

The ballet performance of The Sleeping Beauty, as performed by the Leningrad Russian Ballet Company.

Tuesday, Dec. 21

8:30 Night Court

The Modest Proposal

Christine, the public defender is to be engaged to someone who, unfortunately is not accepted by her colleagues at court.

9:10 Act Of Will

Starring: Peter Coyote, Victoria Tennant and Elizabeth Hurley

The story of the two young brothers and their sister who, after the death of their mother, try to escape the ruthless and greedy uncle and his wife.

10:00 News In English

10:20 From The Classics — Waterloo Bridge

Starring: Vivian Leigh and Robert Taylor

A burning love story between an American army officer and a ballet dancer set during the wars in Europe.

Wednesday, Dec. 22

8:30 Too Close For Comfort

Guess Who's Coming To Burp!

Henry is celebrating his wife's 42nd birthday. He is in for a big surprise. She is going to have a baby!

9:10 Documentary — Ocean World

A spectacular "eco-musical", with the help of montage-editing and colour, presenting unique footage of whales and dolphins in a kaleidoscopic view of the underwater world.

10:00 News In English

10:20 Best Seller — Contract For Murder

Faith starts a new life with her boyfriend Marcos, and off they go to Spain, but the police never abandon their search for her.

Rice art begs question: Culture or commodity?

By Robert Barr
The Associated Press

LONDON — Seven tonnes of rice went on display at the Tate Gallery this year, spread out like a plowed field with neon lights in the furrows.

Neon rice field, the work of Laotian-born Vong Phaophanit, was a finalist for the £20,000 (\$30,000) Turner Prize, Britain's premiere art prize and an annual occasion for middle-brow scoffing.

Rice is culture? Seven tonnes more like a commodity. But maybe there isn't much difference.

The French government, which can get very haughty indeed about art and culture, this year dragged art into the GATT talks, that seemingly endless wrangle about soybeans, textiles, automobiles and the other stuff of world trade.

The French, alarmed by the numbers of their fellow citizens who disloyally buy tickets to American films, clamoured for a "cultural exception" which would allow them to continue subsidising their own film industry.

Some, 4,000 European actors, directors, writers and producers signed up to full-page newspaper advertise-

ments begging for shelter from Hollywood's onslaught. The ad claimed American companies aimed "to complete the conquest of a market they virtually dominate entirely."

As if to make the point, Steven Spielberg's Jurassic Park sold more tickets in France than *Germinal*, at \$28 million the most expensive French film. Perhaps predictably, high-tech dinosaurs were a bigger draw than a saga of 19th century miners struggling for their rights.

"If we agree to subject cultural goods to GATT, in 10 years all films and audiovisual programmes will be of American or Japanese origin," French Culture Minister Jacques Toubon wrote in the Paris newspaper *Le Monde*.

So Yogi Berra and Fred Flintstone were singled out as cultural imperialists in a flap about Ted Turner's cartoon network, which fell short of the 60 per cent European content required by European Community rules.

It's a sore point because Hollywood is one of America's most successful exporters, a giant in a world audiovisual market worth more than \$150 billion a year. Audiovisual materials — films, TV shows and recordings — were the second-biggest U.S. export to the European Community in 1992, worth \$3.7 billion. In return, the United States bought just \$300 million worth of audiovisual treats from the European Community.

So, you might think that French officials were delighted by the financial problems at Euro-Disneyland, the theme park opened in France in 1992.

Instead, a guy in a Mickey Mouse suit was invited to turn on the Christmas lights on the Champs-Elysees to help boost the park's image. The reason: French investors had a big share of the \$4 billion investment, and an obvious stake in the 11,000 jobs at the park.

Another American mega-export, sometimes pictured holding hands with Mickey Mouse, disappeared in action. Michael Jackson bailed out of his *Dangerous* tour in November in classically sordid tinseltown style: Hooked on drugs and accused of sexual scandal.

Staggering amounts of money were implicated, including Sony's \$65 million record deal with Jackson, and a lucrative sponsorship deal with Pepsi-Cola International.

One answer to American domination was to repack Hollywood and ship it back. That was the inspiration for *Sunset Boulevard*, the big new musical by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber, who added tunes and a touch of sweetness to Billy Wilder's bitter film.

Cheekily, Lloyd Webber moved the show straight from London to Los Angeles, where a \$12 million production featuring Glenn Close opened on Dec. 9.

Among the year's cultural winners:

Chen Kaige of China, director of *Farewell My Concubine*, and Jane Campion of New Zealand, director of *The Piano*, shared the Gold Palm Award at the Cannes Film Festival.

Emma Thompson, the British actress, picked up an Academy Award, a Golden Globe and honours from the Los Angeles Film Critics Association for her role in *Howards End*.

Polish composer Henryk Gorecki had an international hit with his *Third Symphony*, a usual feat in the classical musical world where new music tends to repel audiences.

Tony Morrison won the Nobel Prize in Literature, which commends the "visionary force and poetic import" of her writing about the experience of American blacks.

One of the greatest losses to the cultural world came in January with the death in Paris of Rudolf Nureyev, the most charismatic dancer of modern times.

Other notable deaths included film stars Audrey Hepburn, Helen Hayes, Cantinflas, River Phoenix, Vincent Price, Don Ameche and Brandon Lee; filmmakers Federico Fellini of Italy, Elmar Klos of Czechoslovakia and Claude Renoir of France; writers Kobo Abe of Japan and Anthony Burgess and Sir William Golding of Britain; American soprano Marian Anderson and Czech opera soprano Lucia Popp; jazz trumpeter Dizzy Gillespie; Chicago Gospel music pioneer Thomas A. Dorsey; blues guitarist Albert Collins; Spanish sculptor Baltasar Lobo; Spanish flamenco guitarist Carlos Montoya; American band-leaders Billy Eckstine and Bob Crosby; iconoclastic California rocker Frank Zappa; and Egyptian writer and philosopher Zaki Naguib Mahmoud.



Director Jane Campion (right) poses for photographers with actress Holly Hunter and actor Harvey Keitel who star in her film *The Piano*



Anthony Burgess



Frederico Fellini



Michael Jackson

Politics create song and dance as Italy's opera season starts

By Vera Haller
Reuters

ROME — The well-heeled crowd waiting outside Venice's Opera House in freezing weather were victims of the politics strangling Italy's opera tradition.

Union members had called a strike on the opening night of the season, demanding the removal from office of its politically-appointed administrator, Gianfranco Pontel.

The programme, on Nov. 20, was called off 30 minutes after the curtain should have gone up and the crowd went home without hearing a single note of Rossini's *Moses*.

This inauspicious start to the 1993-94 season showed

the changes sweeping Italy's political and business worlds in the wake of corruption scandals had not reached its most beloved institution: The Opera.

Gilberto Bello, a union leader in Venice, accused Pontel of running the La Fenice Opera House with the "methods of the old political system."

"But today these methods are no longer tolerable in politics and they can not be tolerated in a grand and prestigious cultural entity," Bello told the *Corriere Della Sera* newspaper.

Italy's opera houses come under the jurisdiction of their respective city halls, with the mayor responsible

for appointing the top administrator, called the "super-intendente."

In the past, mayors used these appointments to repay political favours, which meant those running opera houses often knew little or nothing about music.

This system of patronage led to tension between administrative and artistic staff, who often disagreed.

The quality of productions suffered and only a few opera houses in Italy are considered world class. They include La Scala in Milan and the Bologna Opera.

"Opera in Italy is too political," said David Oren, who left his position as conductor of Rome's Teatro Dell'Opera after tiring of

acting as middleman between musicians and the front office.

He returned temporarily for the production of Verdi's *Aida*, which opened the Rome season last week.

Rome, unable to attract big-name singers because of its bad reputation, is perhaps the most problem-plagued of Italy's 13 big opera houses.

The Christian Democrat administrator, Gian Paolo Cresci, is despised by the unionised musicians and technicians who accuse him of running it into the ground with "extravagant spending."

Although the opera house has a deficit of 42 billion lire (\$26 million), Mr. Cresci defends spend-

ing on carpeting, lighting and other decorating changes as investments needed to improve the opera house's standing.

The feud between Mr. Cresci and his employees was evident at a news conference to present *Aida* to reporters.

Asked about his relationship with unions in the new season, Mr. Cresci grew visibly angry and snapped: "We are here to talk about *Aida* and not the unions" and ended the conference.

Ornella Marra, whose Filis Union represents workers at the Rome Opera, said there was hope that the movement to reform Italy's scandal-tainted political system eventually

would trickle down to the arts.

Marra noted that a new mayor was elected in Rome on Dec. 5, which could lead to better management at the opera house.

She said an overall reform programme freeing Italy's opera houses from all political ties might be considered by the Culture Ministry after early general elections next spring.

"We will have to fight this year because we need the reform," Marra said.

The disgruntled Venetians; opera-goers finally got their opening, three days later when Pontel and the unions reached a consensus allowing the performance to go ahead.

Jim Morrison still lights fires

PARIS (AFP) — The cult of Doors lead singer Jim Morrison is booming with hundreds of people, most of them young, trekking to pay tribute at his modest grave here, every day of the year.

More than usual visited on Dec. 8 when Morrison would have been 50 had his short life not ended in a Paris hospital on July 3, 1971, when he was only 27.

The permanent day-time guard was strengthened at the tomb, marked by a cube of marble carrying only the words James Douglas Morrison and the dates of his birth and death.

The guard is not so much intended to protect Morrison's grave, one of them said, as the surrounding vaults, which have been covered with graffiti, and to prevent a repetition of the tomb-side parties that marked the 20th anniversary of the death in 1991, hyped up by the release of Oliver Stone's film *The Doors*.

The tomb is also under 24-hour camera surveillance.

Morrison's small tomb is hemmed in by tall gothic vaults at Paris's Pere-Lachaise Cemetery, home to illustrious writers and artists both French and foreign, but it is not difficult to find.

The way is marked by arrows and the word "Jim" in aerosol paint on August tombs. In 1971 a French doctor said the cause of death was a heart attack, but the posthumous fans, many of whom were not born when he died, think otherwise.

"Stoned immaculate," says one graffiti on someone else's tomb, and another "Jim, we are stoned with you 100 per cent."

The sixties rock group Doors broke up after Morrison's death, but some cult members think there will be

a second coming — "Mr. Mojo Risin' 2071 A.D." is the slogan on a dark, moss-covered 19th century vault.

Others are happy just to recall one of the Doors hits that Morrison did not write. Says Manuela from Spain: "Jim, you light my fire."

More than 100,000 people from all over the world visit the tomb every year, leaving potted plants, roses and sometimes a joint by the headstone.

On Dec. 8, people of all ages and nationalities took turns squeezing past the surrounding vaults in Pere-Lachaise Cemetery to place flowers and poems or light candles or incense on the Morrison grave.

The procession took place quietly under the gaze of several policemen.

The mystery of Morrison's death can only have contributed to the cult — heart attack, suicide or overdose. Some said that like the French poet Rimbaud, who fascinated Morrison, he simulated his death but continued to live anonymously.

That theory was helped along by the fact that his death was announced only after he had already been buried at Pere-Lachaise and that at first the grave had no headstone.

The cult is a money-maker, with the Soft Parade Group, named after one of the Doors albums, giving a concert in Paris on Dec. 8 and the following day in Nancy, eastern France.

Morrison came to Paris to write poetry and the French actor Tcheky Karyo and the American John Philip Law gave two nights of readings of his work at the Pompidou Centre.

Photo exhibitions and video shows were held and the top French Television TF1 devoted a spot to Morrison's death, but some cult members think there will be

Banjo artist looks beyond bluegrass

By Alice Ratcliffe
Reuters

CHICAGO — Some musicians choose their instruments. Others are called.

When Bela Fleck first heard a banjo, he says, it was like "little neurons firing in my brain with every note."

That doesn't happen to every kid growing up in New York City, watching and listening to *The Beverly Hillbillies* on TV. But it did to Fleck, who now at 35 seems almost uncomfortable with his success, as one of the few ever to meld banjo, the soul of bluegrass, with modern jazz, funk, reggae and many other musical genres.

Inspired by Earl Scruggs — it was his sprightly banjo first heard on the *Hillbillies* — Fleck just came full circle, re-recording the *Ballad Of Jed Clampett* for the 20th Century Fox movie

The Beverly Hillbillies.

Fleck and his Nashville-based trio, the Flecktones, constantly tour, and have a new album out, *Three Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*. Their fourth includes jazz artists like Bruce Hornsby and Branford Marsalis.

It is their first album without keyboardist Howard Levy, who left the group about a year ago to spend more time with his family.

The Flecktones may do a live album soon, and, according to their Warner Brothers' publicity coordinator, Jeremy Much, the group may also do a European tour early next year.

Musical nomads, at times they run with the international folk crowd but can just as easily turn up in jazz clubs. They have appeared with rock bands, including the grateful dead.

Besides Fleck, the group includes Victor Lemonte Wooten, recently named

"best overall bassist" by *Bass Player* magazine.

"Bout time," says one listener in a Chicago club.

The Wooten-Fleck meeting, like much else about the group, seems pre-ordained. Wooten, early in his career, played at a theme park, where for fun he would try out bass licks on a fellow musician's banjo. Urged to listen to Fleck's recordings, he developed a similar technique on bass. Wooten eventually found his way to Fleck, after playing for him over the phone.

Wooten's brother is sometimes called Roy Wooten but more often goes by the name "Future Man". Fleckian lore has it that "Futch", for short, was born in 2050. He came back in time, presumably to show people what fun they're missing, musically.

Future Man, proficient on normal drums, also sees boxes and garbage cans as percussive instruments.

According to Fleck, even early in his present-day life, the young *Future Man* was fond of creating prototype drum machines "with guitars, adhesive tape and nails, and later began" playing drums on the guitar.

The *Future Man* instrument of choice is a drum synthesiser, the "synth-axe." Carried and played with fingers, it reproduces drum sounds and pre-recorded heartbeats, as well as things that sound like pterodactyl screeches, B-52 squadrons, primal screams, generalised thuds and celestial hums.

Before a recent show Fleck glanced around at a Chicago jazz club, and said, "This is a much too small room for us."

It is a fitting metaphor for attempts to categorise the group's music, which to a casual listener sounds like the *Beverly Hillbillies* meet the space age jazz avengers. Flecktone audiences mir-

ror the band's diversity. One show brought together well-heeled jazz types and rock fans.

One of the few negative things anyone seems to be able to say about Fleck is that to play with the Flecktones full-time in 1990, he left behind the popular bluegrass group New Grass Revival.

This may have alienated some fans. But at recent shows, a weird breed of Appalachian grunge still whooped at every electric bluegrass-sounding banjo riff.

If anything, it seems their audiences have expanded. "I never liked bluegrass," says Will Howard, a local jazz musician, but, he says, he likes the Flecktones. He calls each band member a "virtuoso."

Banjo music can be busy music. Fleck has shown that it can also be quiet, profoundly melodic, music.

Yet, he says, "I think it is possible to be more lyrical."

An admirer of jazz musicians Chick Corea and Miles Davis, Fleck adds, "these guys are on a harmonic level I would love to get closer to."

Apart from the group, Fleck also dreams of making "a very acoustic record," collaborating with different musicians.

While Fleck may not quite know where he's going, he knows exactly where he stands on the great banjo ladder of evolution. Marking with his hand an imaginary rung, he says simply — "I just took it from here to here."

For the banjo, he sees few limitations.

"There could be a concerto written for Banjo and orchestra. Flamenco. The banjo could play be-bop, no problem. Delta blues. Romantic music. Period music. Pop. Rock'n'roll. Caribbean music. Bulgarian music. Chinese music. African music...." he said.

Surgeons make no bones about enthusiasm for coral

By Penelope
Hocking-Vigie
Reuter

MONACO — Bones damaged on dry land are being mended using a remedy from the sea.

Coral, whose intricate formations have fascinated scientists for centuries, is being used increasingly for grafts in orthopaedic, plastic and dental surgery.

A porous material compatible with human bone, it is an ideal substance for implants.

Gathered in pollution-free zones mostly around New Caledonia in the Pacific,

coral was first used in bone grafts about 20 years ago, mainly in France.

"The method is now being used all over the world," said France's Jean-Louis Patat, one of the pioneers in the field.

He was among 50 doctors who discussed the use of coral in bone grafts at last month's seventh international symposium on biomineralisation — the production of mineral substances by living organisms.

The seminar was organised by Monaco's Oceanographic Museum, famous for its research into coral.

Doctors and dentists, enthusiastic about results achieved with coral implants, say the human body does not reject them.

Coral is a calcareous build-up on rocks and the sea-bed composed of the skeletons of millions of polyps, tiny animals that absorb calcium carbonate from sea water and excrete limestone.

Unlike other materials, its porous structure is compatible with the requirements of bone growth and sea water, which contributes to the coral's formation, has a similar mineral content to that of blood serum.

"The coral attracts the bone cells which recognise it as a sort of cousin," Dr. Patat said. "Eventually, the implanted coral is completely assimilated and its place taken by bone."

"At first the newly-formed bone mimics the coral structure, but it gradually remodels itself and takes on the architecture of the recipient bone," he said.

One advantage of using coral was to avoid having to take a piece of bone from another part of the body for the graft.

Dr. Patat said the wound caused to extract a piece of

bone could be more painful and take longer to heal than the graft itself, using coral was economical, allowing patients to leave hospital earlier.

Not having to cut away bone saves time during surgery and drastically reduces the amount of blood needed for transfusion.

Professor Pierre Kehr, of Strasbourg's Stephanie Hospital in eastern France, who uses coral implants for neck surgery, said reducing the need for blood transfusions cut the risk of passing on AIDS and hepatitis.

In the form of granules, coral is being used in plastic

surgery to reconstruct facial bones. Unlike a solid graft, some granules can be removed by suction in the case of swelling.

Dentists are studying the use of coral granules to build up receding jaw bone to anchor wobbly teeth.

"Coral is particularly interesting for us, given the present legal climate faced by the medical profession in North America," said George Sandor, of Canada's Toronto Hospital For Sick Children.

"We've seen how silicone or other materials which stay with the patients all their lives can cause prob-

lems," he said. "The possibilities offered by coral are exciting, since it eventually disappears."

He said granules, injected through a small incision and in some cases under local anaesthetic, limited scarring. But more time was needed to test its long-term stability as a bone graft.

Surgeons have found coral implants a valuable means of strengthening broken hip-bones in elderly people, providing a more solid base in which to screw metal pins. Patients could usually walk earlier after the operation.

"However, coral is not a miracle product, even if it is an extraordinary one," Dr. Patat warned. "Its application must follow strict rules."

He said it could work only in contact with living bone in a zone with a good blood supply. It had to be held firmly in place since rubbing could cause irritation because its surface is not completely smooth.

Although coral with a 50 per cent porosity could withstand pressure of 250 kg per sq cm (350 lb per sq inch), it could break if it was twisted or received a sharp knock.

Euthanasia debate deepens after Dutch Senate approves new law

By Sara Henley
Reuter

AMSTERDAM — "I handed over a box with 20 capsules and a bottle of liquid, with the words 'you can do what you like with it'."

Dutch psychiatrist Boudewijn Chabot, charged with wilfully assisting suicide, gave this testimony to a court in the northern Dutch town of Assen earlier this year.

"She put some cream dessert into a cup, opened the capsules and shook the contents into the dessert, stirred it. She poured the drink into a glass."

"She asked (her friend) Wil... to turn on the tape recorder — Bach. She ate and drank the drugs. She said 'it doesn't taste bad... it's not too bad at all'."

"She lay down. She kissed the portrait of her sons which was standing by the bed. The music was turned on. At midday exactly she was unconscious. At 1205 the colour of her face changed."

"At 1331 she was dead." The court acquitted Chabot, even though his 50-

year-old patient was physically in good health.

The prosecution has taken the case to appeal before the Supreme Court, just one of many tests of how far a pragmatic approach to euthanasia can go.

Though illegal, mercy killing is fairly common here.

While other countries may not prosecute doctors who turn off life-support machines, the Dutch have sought a system which accepts that doctors must sometimes actively end a life.

In an effort to end a 15-year debate, the Dutch Senate approved a bill setting out guidelines for doctors facing suffering they believe to be intolerable, a prognosis they see as hopeless and a patient who has repeatedly asked for death.

Laid down in a 28-point checklist, the guidelines offer no guarantee against prosecution for carrying out euthanasia. But the Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) says the government has agreed not to prosecute doctors who follow them closely.

"We are assuming that if a doctor follows the procedure he will not be prosecuted," said KNMG spokesman Roelof Mulder. "Otherwise why set the criteria?"

According to a 1991 report commissioned by the government, Dutch doctors end the lives of about six people who have asked to die every day. They assist in about one suicide daily. Another three patients who cannot ask to die are killed each day.

Opinion polls show that more than two-thirds of the population want to be given the right to choose to die.

This is heresy to many religions, and some doctors see it as a travesty of their vocation. The Roman Catholic Church has condemned the Dutch approach as "a monstrous aberration" and a violation of human rights.

"We believe it is a human right to opt for life, and also to opt for death," said Lide Jannink, chairwoman of the Dutch Foundation for Voluntary Euthanasia (NVVE).

"The Bible is so old. Technology has come so far

you can live for years and have an appalling life. The Vatican hasn't answered that question. What is a life?"

The problem in Chabot's case is that he risked breaking a cardinal rule in the code: It is not easy to prove that a physically healthy person is in intolerable suffering.

The woman, given the fake name of Netty Boomsma by the Dutch media, was divorced (her husband beat her). One of her two sons had committed suicide, the other died of cancer. She attempted suicide by overdose in 1990, but failed.

"Why do I have to keep on living when I'm already 50?" she wrote. "Everything is so senseless, so empty, so useless. The grief, the despair, it's all so terrible."

Besides Chabot's case, due to be heard this month, pro-euthanasia groups and doctors are seeking clarity on the sensitive problem of those who cannot express a will to die.

"The discussion certainly isn't over," said Jannink. The NVVE, which is

opposed to any form of involuntary euthanasia, guides its members on how to ask in advance for death should they fall into a coma.

But there is no such option for newborn babies, the severely mentally ill and often for those with senile dementia.

"If I no longer recognise my children, I will have reached a degree of dis-

figurement that goes much further than the point at which I would be able to live," a professor of psychiatry said on Dutch Television.

The discussion is troubled by a shifting political climate in the Netherlands and rising criticism from abroad.

Catholics, reinforcing their principled stand against mercy killing, have

said the laws may set the Netherlands on the path to Nazi selection — even though the new guidelines are intended to lay down the criteria which would stamp out abuse.

This prompted an amendment of the new law before it was passed. Its sponsor, the Catholic Justice Minister Ernst Hirsch Ballin, promised that every case of euthanasia would be fol-

lowed up aggressively.

"I have the impression that the political climate is shifting away from our interests," said Jannink.

"The majority of the Dutch just haven't really thought about it," said Rien Buegel, a pro-life campaigner. "They just follow the masses. But the older generation, mainly people with dementia, are very worried."

High fat diet raises risk of lung cancer among non-smokers

WASHINGTON (AFP) — Quitting smoking is no longer enough: A high fat diet raises the risk of lung cancer among people who do not smoke, according to a recent study.

Women whose diet consists of 15 per cent or more of saturated fat are about six times more likely to develop lung cancer than women who eat diets with 10 per cent or less of fat, according to a study by the National Cancer Institute

(NCI). "The leading contributors of dietary saturated fat were hamburgers, cheeseburgers, and meat loaf... followed by weekly consumption of cheeses and cheese spreads, hot dogs, ice cream and sausages," the study said.

Other studies have linked fatty diets to colon, prostate and breast cancer, as well as to heart disease.

Researcher Michael Alavanja said he compared the

diets of 429 non-smoking women with lung cancer to the diets of 1,021 women who did not develop the disease.

They filled out questionnaires on their diet, which revealed that the women who ate the least fat and the most fruit, vegetables, beans and peas were the least likely to get lung cancer.

The study was designed to try to determine why about 20 per cent of the

women with lung cancer are non-smokers. Doctors have determined that the lung cancer of 90 per cent of male victims was linked to smoking, said Dr. Alavanja.

"The point of the study is that if you have a diet that is excessive in these kinds of foods, that is where the problem seems to lie," he said.

The study was published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute.

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

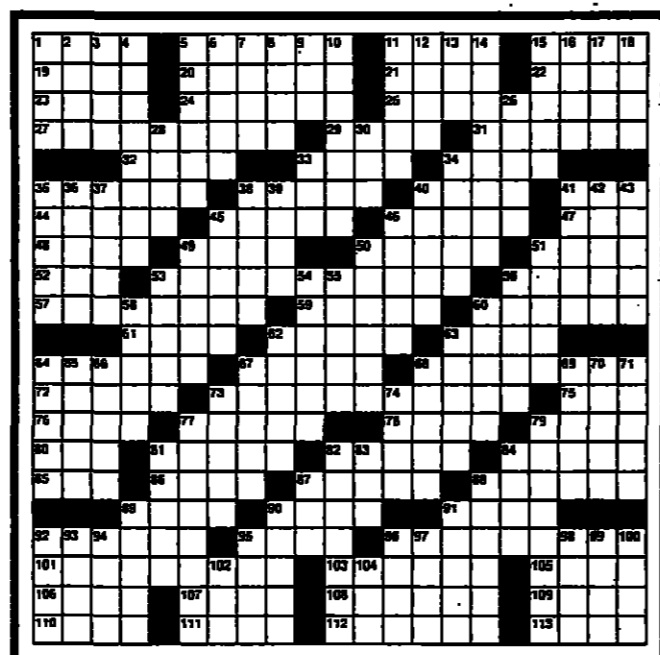
WAY TO GO!
By Norma Steinberg

ACROSS
1 Search thoroughly
5 Nautically dressed
10 Count calories
15 Decaying leaves on a forest floor
19 Biblical
20 Actress Dahl
21 Actress Samuels
22 Large landmass
23 Artist Magritte
24 Actress Vaccaro
25 Vegetable garden
26 One's ideal love
27 Oxford or dog
28 Chew candy
29 Ship's
30 employees
31 Caple
32 Carrot
33 Brainless deeply
36 Ersatz
40 Stagger

DOWN
1 Twine
2 Concluded
3 Neck hair
4 Whittens
5 Patted on
6 Apache mope
7 — bargain
8 Closed in
9 Fruit
10 Moves
11 Addition-ending phrase, for short
12 Hungarian Nagy
13 Big bird
14 Unleashing
15 Cartoon duck
16 Flying
17 letters
18 Drama
19 Flancon
20 Australian mascot

41 Priest's white robe
44 Goodies
45 Householders on a feast
46 Latin American dance
47 Mauna —
48 Thousands of soldiers
49 Polka —
50 Darts
51 — to the Chief
52 Picnic cracker
53 Jags and does
54 Jags and does
55 — Hume, Ind.
56 — Weathered, as
57 Hoarsely
58 Actress Tammy
61 American Beauty
62 Strategic hit

28 Alan Young TV program
29 Movie lead
30 Massachusetts cape
31 Showers blows upon
32 "Love Story"
33 A Duma
34 French river
35 Con man's mark
36 Greeting for the
40 Inland
41 Dried
42 French river
43 Buried
44 Laid to rest
45 Undergarments
46 Frock
47 More rapidly



Last Week's Cryptograms

- Group of apprentices at fine crystal factory attended dull glass class.
- If you take yourself too seriously, then no one will take you seriously.
- During the realistic horror movie, several hundred customers came out screaming.
- Young chorus girl was well-known for her fancy high kick.

CRYPTOGRAMS

1. HUNUTSK GNWTU IYMF PUEN. OUNUT
OYOUT KURUT OYMFUI NASN OUMF WP
OYMFUI OOUOUTG. AU OYKMAUI YN

—By Rita Salvato

2. KNZOKYNI JLA UNPABALDFIB GALXHSW
DNE SNZZOX HG LI WUO SNAGOW JLA
DONAFIB KYNZZ AHB.

—By Eugene T. Malaska

3. YEXY FFFPTF EZ PNO ATXNO YEQO MEX
SNBVGKQ NQ BYNGO, QITZ XEATO EQ
MNBV QK MPNBVENB.

—By Dianne R. McGogy

4. YOCXIN ATZZ ARFMX WYVFWXNP VOTZZ
IATCB BER NTZZ TY I VTSXWPF VIO,
GOTSCBN VNTZRW BER RSGNTPREZ
AIO.

—By Gordon Miller

Diagrams 21 x 21. By Roger Coburn

ACROSS
1 Steamer
5 Theatrical
9 Round part
10 Out of order
12 Added up
15 Promote
16 Run
17 Desert
20 Thelard, once
22 Diamond number
23 A Carter
24 Slope

25 "Drove Comedy"
27 Hawaiian state
28 U.S. Grant's foe
29 Ratio phrase
30 Sleep like —
31 Appropriation
32 House payment
33 Risk
34 Back talk
37 Horrible

39 T.H.
40 Tobacco kins
41 Ebb and flow
42 Lanchester
43 A Prognosis
44 Let it stand
45 Removes, in printing
46 Labour city
47 Tooth
48 Pail
49 A Copperfield

50 Portland's state
51 Musical sound
52 — contester
53 Urusai
54 Withdraw
55 High I.O. group
56 Dates for small articles
57 Winter white
58 Concordia
59 Fanatics

Europeans find herbal cures a prescription for success

By Ben Hirschler
Reuter

LONDON — European consumers, worried about the side-effects of modern drugs and searching for more natural cures, are flocking to herbal remedies.

While advocates of plant medicines applaud the return to what they say are tried and tested remedies, there is concern that slack regulation may be opening the door to charlatans.

According to a new study by market research group Datamonitor, European community sales of herbal medicines hit \$1.76 billion in 1992 — a one-third jump in just five years.

Homeopathic treatments made up another \$1.36 billion.

The Germans, with a long tradition of herbal cures, remain by far the biggest users, accounting for half of the total. But other nationalities are catching up fast.

British sales, for example, have increased by 70 per cent since 1987 while French turnover is up by 50 per cent.

Herbalism expert Simon Mills of Exeter University's Centre for Health Studies believes the surge in interest reflects widespread frustration with modern health care.

Many people fear the side-effects of potent prescription drugs and hanker for a milder, natural remedy — especially for chronic conditions such as arthritis or skin disease.

"Quite frankly there isn't any proper treatment for many of these conditions so people are desperate," said Mr. Mills.

"And the fact is that those who use herbal remedies give a high satisfac-

tion rating — so whether it's all in the mind or not, they are undoubtedly benefiting."

Herbalism is hardly a modern "fad" — until the middle of this century plant products were pharmacists' main AIDS. Even today 80 per cent of the world's population still uses herbal and other traditional medicine for their primary health care needs, according to the World Health Organisation.

Established herbalists are concerned that their cause may be undermined by "cowboy" operators selling cranky, inadequately tested and even downright dangerous products.

"There is a serious risk that the authentic licensed herbal medicine sector will become unsustainable because of the failure of the authorities to police the market," said Tony Hampson of Pottery (herbal supplies) Ltd., co-chairman of Britain's natural medicines group.

He is particularly concerned about an influx of potent treatments from Eastern Europe, America and Asia — often sold by mail order or through special clinics.

They frequently evade proper clinical assessment by being marketed as dietary supplements rather than medicines.

David Philipson of London University's School of Pharmacy says some exotic herbs may offer real clinical benefits.

In some cases treatments lack any scientific basis, creating the risk of overdose similar to that from illegal narcotic drugs, he said.

The London area and found alarmingly variable levels of active ingredient.

Herbalists have been severely shaken by the case of more than 60 Belgian women believed to have suffered serious kidney damage after taking a Chinese herbal remedy for slimming. A group of 24 have now gone to court to win compensation for the treatment which they say has wrecked their lives.

The case may be the worst, but it is not the only example of herbalism gone wrong.

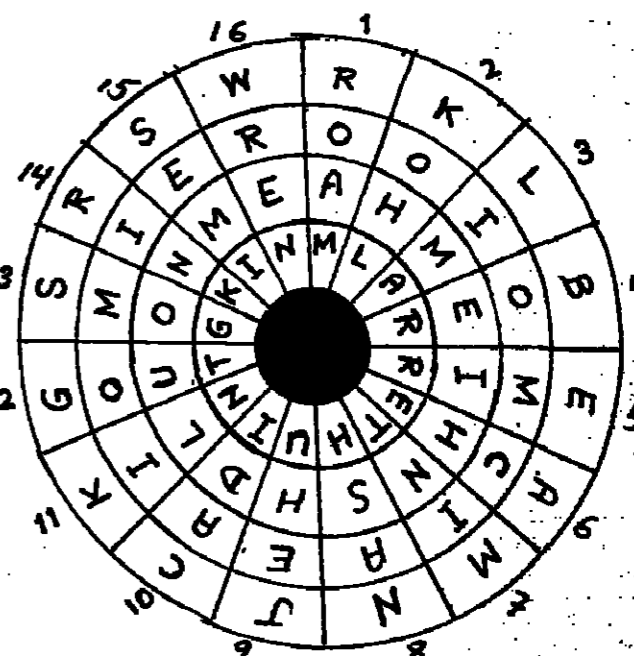
Doctors from Britain's National Poisons Unit, writing in the Lancet medical

journal in July, reported seeing 49 cases of apparent toxic effects from taking herbal medicines and food supplements over a five year period.

In comparison with the frequent adverse side effects caused by conventional drugs, Exeter University's Dr. Mills believes that record is not bad.

But the industry is edgy. Only last week British Health Food Associations decided to withdraw all supplies of the American Indian medicine Chaparral, derived from the leaves of the creosote bush Larrea Divaricata, after reports it might cause liver damage.

SOLUTION PUZZLES



The name of the black leader is:
MARTIN LUTHER KING

Jordan seeks no favours'

(Continued from page 1)

questions related to unemployment and poverty and to deal with the numerous requirements of the modern age," said Prince Hassan.

One of the camp's notable citizens, Mahmoud Ibrahim, welcomed the Regent and presented the camp's requests for basic services. Prince Hassan

said these demands would receive all attention by the concerned authorities.

Prince Hassan toured the two schools, which have laboratories and other utilities in addition to 28 classrooms each. The total cost of the two schools was JD 650,000. Among those present at the opening ceremony was Canada's Ambassador to Jordan Andrew Robinson.

Rabin: Self-rule can go ahead

(Continued from page 1)

The two teams were meeting until later on Wednesday to discuss transportation and electricity issues.

The historic peace accord provides for withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho as the first stage of a five-year interim period of autonomy during which the two sides will negotiate a permanent settlement.

Mr. Arafat, currently visiting London, called on Israel to join the PLO in implementing their accord with honesty. He made clear the 10-day delay in Israeli troop withdrawals — beyond Dec. 13 — should not be a precedent for further delays.

Mr. Arafat Wednesday put the responsibility on the international community, Washington and Moscow in particular, to help implement the autonomy plan, if Israeli-Palestinian disagreements are not rapidly sorted out.

"No implementation means that the responsibility lies on the whole international community and especially the co-sponsors" of the agreement signed in Washington Sept. 13, he said.

Speaking after meeting British Prime Minister John Major Wednesday, Mr. Arafat talked at length about the postponement of the first deadline get out in the agreement.

"The (Israel-PLO) agreement is binding on both parties, but this agreement is not only an Israeli-Palestinian agreement," Mr. Arafat said. "It has also been signed by the United States and Russia under the auspices of the president of the United States and under the eyes of the entire world."

Mr. Arafat said he would be ready to agree to the presence of an international force — "European, Canadian, Scandinavian, Russian, Chinese, if you like" — if it was needed to ensure "security" in the transition period for the occupied territories.

"If the Israelis don't trust our security measures, they don't have reason not to trust an international presence and international security," the PLO leader said.

The Israeli army will be free to go anywhere in the autonomous areas while Palestinian police will not be allowed to arrest Israelis, a senior official has told a parliamentary committee.

"There are no restrictions on the IDF (Israeli defence forces)," said foreign ministry legal adviser Yoel Singer, one of Israel's negotiators at autonomy talks with the PLO in Cairo.

"The army's responsibility to protect Israelis is not limited in time or space," he told the law committee on Tuesday.

Mr. Singer is the Israeli responsible for drafting the interim agreement to implement the Sept. 13 declaration of principles.

Mr. Singer, who helped draft the declaration during secret talks in Norway, also told the committee that Israel's military government would remain the source of authority in the autonomous areas, where a Palestinian autonomy council is due to be elected by July 9.

It would resume all powers if the declaration, which he stressed was reversible, fell apart.

"If one side violates the agreement in a substantial way, it is clear the other side does not have to fulfill its part," Mr. Singer said. A violation would be for example the Palestinians declaring a state during the five-year interim period.

Mr. Arafat, meanwhile, appealed to British businessmen to invest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, saying the areas needed massive investment to build much-needed infrastructure.

Speaking to a meeting of businessmen during his visit to London, said the Israelis were leaving nothing behind in the occupied territories. "We will have to start from scratch," he said.

"We need a fishing port, a trading port, an airport and a

Russia

(Continued from page 1)

assured him the strong showings by nationalists and communists would not slow reform.

The exact balance of forces in parliament is unlikely to be clear until the new Duma meets in January.

U.N. fund to pay in April

(Continued from page 1)

its civilians from a border area which a U.N. commission granted to Kuwait, after the 1991 Gulf war, the United Nations said Wednesday.

The U.N. Iraq-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM) said that on Monday it received a "positive response" from the Iraqi authorities about the removal of the Iraqi population and their assets on the Kuwaiti side of the newly-demarcated border.

The new border gives post-war Kuwait an extra strip of territory some 600 metres wide along the entire length of the 200-kilometre frontier.

There have been frequent skirmishes along the border since the Gulf war which ended seven months of Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Iraq had so far refused to recognise the new border, one of the conditions for the lifting of the U.N. embargo in force since the August 1990 invasion. The Security Council approved the line, drawn up by a commission.

Exiles return

(Continued from page 1)

Some decided to go back despite the consequences. "I was being interrogated at Hebron prison when the Israelis deported me," Musa Mohammad Kanna, 31, said. "I expect to return to prison. Nevertheless, I am overjoyed to be returning to Palestine."

Eighteen exiles chose not to return to avoid long jail sentences. They left the camp with false identity papers.

Mr. Rabin resorted to expelling the 415 men suspected of links with Hamas or the Islamic Jihad after a wave of killings.

"We have to accept it was a mistake," said Communications and Culture Minister Shulamit Aloni. "The decision was taken for internal reasons under public pressure. We did not weigh all the consequences."

In Marj Al Zohour, Lebanese villagers and relief workers dismantled the tent camp of the expellees.

A few hours after the last batch of exiles were taken back to Israel, relief workers and residents of villages bordering the camp took down its 40 tents and carried them off in trucks.

IAF stages protest walkout

(Continued from page 1)

a major issue," he said. Irbid Deputy Abdul Ra'uf Rawabdeh said establishing such a committee would be an illegal act that the House should not take. He said the law specifies ways through which people who question the integrity of the elections can pursue their protests.

The heated debate that ensued before the motion was killed continued into the afternoon part of the session after deputies Abdullah Ensour, Samir Habashneh and others failed to convince the IAF deputies to return to the meeting.

While Mr. Rawabdeh said the IAF parliamentarians violated the law by walking out from the House without a permission, Deputy Ali Abu Al Ragheb (Amman) said: "What happened was illegal."

Criticising the IAF deputies for leaving the session, Mr. Sour said all parliamentarians should respect the opinion of the majority. This did not go well with Deputy Bassam Haddadin (Zarqa), who demanded that the House stop "the process of outbidding."

Mr. Sour responded strongly to Mr. Haddadin, saying: "It is not us who are outbidding. It is you who tried to outbid us for four years (during the term of the 11th Parliament of which both were members)."

IAF deputies said they will hold a meeting to discuss whether they would boycott the House or not in protest as other lawmakers said they will arrange a meeting between Mr. Masri and IAF lawmakers to resolve the dispute.

At the request of Deputy Mohammad Addoub Al Zaben (Central Bedouins), Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Talal Al Hassan briefed the House on the outcome of last week's visits to Jordan of Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) Chairman Yasser Arafat and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher.

But the briefing did not exceed what had already been published by the media, deputies said, demanding that a session be held to discuss the peace process.

Mr. Hassan said that His Majesty King Hussein discussed with Mr. Arafat the obstacles facing the imple-

mentation of the PLO-Israel accord, emphasising the need for further Arab coordination and expressing Jordan's willingness to provide the Palestinians with all the support it can give.

He said King Hussein's visits to Syria and Egypt worked to consolidate the Arab position in the peace talks. He said the King reiterated Jordan's commitment to a comprehensive solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, and Damascus and Cairo expressed their determination to develop their bilateral relations with Jordan.

In response to a question from Mr. Habashneh about the "failure" of the Jordan-PLO economic talks, acting Prime Minister Ma'n Abu Nowar reiterated earlier statements that the talks did not fail.

He said Chairman Arafat had "personally" assured him that he would discuss the draft agreement Jordan and the PLO had reached during a meeting of the PLO Executive Committee at the end of his current visit to the United Kingdom.

"I am sure the agreement will be signed," he said.

During its three-and-a-half hour session, the House decided to set up six temporary committees and referred to its various panels a number of draft laws sent to it by the government.

The House referred to its Financial Committee a draft appendix to the 1993 budget and an amended draft law on additional tax.

It referred to the Judiciary Committee an amended military pension draft law, a draft law on standards and specifications, the amended draft election law, and a draft law on production and sale of alcohol.

Deputy Khalil Haddadin protested against the draft law on alcohol saying it was on unconstitutional since it violates article six of the Constitution which says all citizens are equal regardless of their religion.

The draft law bans Muslims from producing, importing or selling alcohol but leaves the door open for Christians to engage in the trade.

Mr. Masri cut the debate short by referring the law to the Judiciary Committee after Mr. Rawabdeh pointed out that the Islam is the religion of the state.

12 foreigners killed in Algeria

ALGIERS (Agencies) — An unidentified group stabbed to death 12 Croatian and Bosnian citizens Tuesday night in a village about 60 kilometres southwest of Algiers, the official news agency APS said Wednesday.

The 12, all Christians, were working for a company called Hydro-Electra and were killed in the village of Tamezghia, the agency said, quoting security services.

Twenty-three foreigners have now been killed in Algeria in the past three months, 16 of them since Nov. 30 — the deadline set by a fundamentalist group for foreigners to leave the country or risk death.

APS earlier said the killings took place at around 8.30 p.m. (1930 GMT) on Tuesday evening.

Last week the Armed Islamic Group, which set the deadline, gave the Paris daily Le Monde a statement saying it killed four foreigners — a Spaniard, a Russian, a Frenchman and a Briton — in the first eight days of December.

The group also vowed to kill

more foreigners. "Attacks will go on... we will continue hunting the enemies of God," Le Monde quoted the statement as saying.

Meanwhile foreign residents in Algeria prepared to flee the country after the announcement Wednesday of the massacre.

The 12 killed Tuesday were among 20 workers from the former Yugoslavia working on an Algerian state-funded project for the Croatan dam-building firm Hidroelektra which said it had begun the emergency evacuation of its remaining personnel.

Many foreigners in Algeria brought forward the date of their departure for end of year holidays to arrange their definite departure from the country.

The holiday was due to start officially on Thursday night, but foreign residents began leaving on Wednesday, officials said.

The governments of France, Spain, Germany, Russia, Canada and the United States

have already urged their nationals to leave Algeria unless they have essential business.

Algerian Prime Minister Redha Malck said he was "horrified" at the latest killing and pledged his government would "eliminate terrorism and its causes."

The precise circumstances of the massacre remained unclear.

The Croatan and Bosnian workers lived in temporary barracks set up near a small village at the entrance to the worksite where they were engaged on contract work. Initial reports said the killers entered the barracks during the night of Tuesday, taking their victims by surprise.

It was not immediately known whether there were women or children among the dead. They had been due to leave Algeria definitely in the next few days, the Hidroelektra firm in Zagreb said. Croatia's ambassador to Algeria visited the scene of the massacre.

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U.K., Ireland agree historic pact

LONDON (R) — The British and Irish prime ministers agreed on a landmark declaration Wednesday aimed at persuading Republican and Protestant gunmen to end 25 years of violence in Northern Ireland.

Britain's John Major and Ireland's Albert Reynolds announced agreement on the pact on the steps of 10 Downing Street, the British prime minister's office, after a 40-minute meeting.

The declaration, to be made public later, is expected to acknowledge the right of Irish people to self-determination — a key condition for the ending of violence by Irish Republican Army (IRA) guerrillas fighting to overturn British rule in Northern Ireland.

"It is a declaration for democracy and dialogue and it is based on consent," Mr. Major told reporters. "It makes no compromise on strongly held principles."

There was no immediate reaction from the IRA or its political wing Sinn Fein, which

was said to be awaiting a text of the declaration before making any statement.

In a clear message to the IRA, Mr. Major said it was now up to those who used or supported violence to take this opportunity to end the conflict.

"The door is open to them. They won't have a better opportunity and they don't have a better option," he said. Mr. Reynolds, standing by Mr. Major's side, said: "This is a historic opportunity for peace. We hope that everybody will grasp it so that we can all make a new beginning."

The accord will also need to reassure the British province's Protestant majority that it is not being abandoned to minority status in a united, predominantly Roman Catholic Ireland.

Ian Paisley, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party which wants Northern Ireland to remain British, was also at Downing Street and denounced the agreement as a sell-out.

"You have consulted Dublin

but you have not consulted the people of Ulster," he thundered. He called the talks, "a dark hour of treachery."

It was the third meeting this month between Mr. Major and Mr. Reynolds as they staged a determined push to end a conflict which has taken more than 3,000 lives since 1969.

A key point in the accord is expected to state that both sides agree there should be no change to Northern Ireland's status without the support of a majority of its people.

The pact is expected to spell out principles to assure the IRA that Britain would not oppose Northern Ireland's union with Ireland if a majority wanted it — a clause London hopes will also reassure the Protestants.

Dublin is also set to agree to hold a referendum on repealing clauses in its constitution which embody its historic claim to Northern Ireland.

The latest peace moves came to a head after a wave of killings in October underscored the urgency of bringing peace to the province which

Britain created 72 years ago before the rest of Ireland won independence.

Britain said it was ready to talk to Sinn Fein within three months.

British officials said violence would have to cease and the Irish Republican Army give up a guerrilla campaign that has killed more than 3,000 people since 1969.

The officials said Britain, which admitted to having secret contact with the IRA since February, had not shown any passages to Sinn Fein of the joint declaration.

They stressed it was important that the declaration offered a balanced approach that would reassure Irish nationalists and the Protestant majority who want to remain part of Britain.

Clearly keen to ensure that their joint declaration would hopefully tempt the gunmen to lay down their arms, one official said: "It is an extra push, an extra pressure putting the onus on the men of violence. No-one can predict what the reaction will be."



Serbian policemen inspect a U.N. convoy in the Serbian-held Bosnian town of Banja Luka (AFP photo)

Serbs help Bihac in battle with Bosnian army

SARAJEVO (AP) — Exploiting hostility between Muslim factions, Serb forces are helping a breakaway region in northwest Bosnia battle troops loyal to the Sarajevo government, U.N. officials said Wednesday.

Omda, Isbald Van Biesebroeck said Bosnian army troops and forces loyal to secessionist Muslim leader Fikret Abdic have been engaged in "fierce fighting" around Bihac.

"The Serbs are helping the Abdic forces," said Mr. Van Biesebroeck, a spokesman for U.N. peacekeepers in Bosnia. "The're probably doing that just to destabilise the situation further."

He did not detail the extent of Serb support. Serbs helped the pro-Abdic forces earlier by allowing them to cross their territory and giving them artillery and tank support. But Bosnian Radio said Serb artillery was involved in the latest fighting.

Mr. Abdic's close ties to Serbs and Croats have spared most of the Bihac region the horrors of the ethnic war convulsing the rest of the country, earning him a loyal following. Among the 300,000 residents of Bihac, the 52-year-old Abdic is known as "Babo," a diminutive for father. In Sarajevo, the seat of Bosnia's government, he is considered a traitor.

A longtime opponent of Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic, Mr. Abdic declared the 860-square-mile (1,230-kilometre) Bihac region autonomous in September, signed peace accord with Serbs and Croats a month later and be-

gan battling the Bosnian army's 5th Corps, headquartered in Bihac.

His forces now control about one-third of the area, mostly in the north.

The situation in the enclave illustrated the complexity of the Bosnian war, where alliances are forged not only on ethnic basis, but also due to economic and other interests.

Sarajevo was quieter Wednesday, a day after the most intense battling in a month. Capt. Van Biesebroeck said 11 civilians were killed Tuesday and 19, including six in Serb-held suburbs, were wounded. But sporadic shelling continued, and residents were urged to remain indoors.

U.N. forces were shot at twice Tuesday, once by Bosnian forces on the road between Zvornik and Tuzla and once when they strayed into the middle of a battle in the Bihac region. There were no casualties, however.

Peacekeepers have threatened several times to retaliate against force, but have shot back only briefly and in isolated incidents. On Tuesday, French Foreign Minister Alain Juppe demanded air strikes in response to attacks both on U.N. personnel and U.N.-proclaimed security zones such as Sarajevo.

"I ask myself why the U.N. doesn't use force in Sarajevo. It has all the means to do it," Mr. Juppe told French TV as the screen showed images of bombardments. "Everyone committed themselves to respect humanitarian aid and the security zones. Why, if that commitment is violated, when the Serbs violate it, why don't we use air forces?"

N. Korea's nuclear threat is real — Seoul

SEOUL (R) — Prime Minister Hwang In-Sung said Wednesday it was sad South Koreans were not taking the North's nuclear threat seriously.

"North Korea's refusal to allow international inspectors to inspect its nuclear sites poses a serious threat, not only on the peninsula but to peace in East Asia and the world," he said during a visit to Seoul's National Defence College.

"It's upsetting that citizens don't recognise that things that exist right now are threatening our national security."

South Korea and its Western allies fear the North is building a nuclear bomb. Pyongyang denies this but has barred international inspectors from its nuclear facilities.

The South Korean Defence Ministry said Tuesday that recent reports in U.S. newspapers of a possible attack on Seoul from Pyongyang were making South Koreans nervous.

But many ordinary civilians in the South are blasé about the threat of war, something they have lived with since the 1950-3 Korean War, which has never formally been ended.

U.S. Army General John Shalikashvili, chairman of the U.S. military Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), said in Washington Tuesday U.S. and South Korean forces would defeat any attack by the North on the South but refused to guarantee Seoul's safety.

Other senior U.S. defence officials and private military analysts have worried openly that the heavily populated South Korean capital could be devastated or even fall to North Korean ground forces before any attack was repelled.

North Korea has moved some 70 per cent of its 1.1 million military forces near the border with South Korea in recent years. South Korea has a military of some 750,000 troops and there are about 35,000 U.S. troops assigned to the South.

When asked if Seoul could be protected, Army General John Shalikashvili said, "I certainly think there's a very good likelihood."

"However there are also many imponderables that you simply cannot predict," he added.

It was Gen. Shalikashvili's first press conference since becoming JCS chairman two months ago. He noted that Seoul was less than 25 miles (40 km) from the border with North Korea.

"As far as our confidence to stop a North Korean attack into the South, I'm very, very confident," Gen. Shalikashvili said, but he added cautiously that he could not speculate on where any attack might be halted in relation to Seoul.

Suspect arrested in Picasso theft

STOCKHOLM (AP) — Police detained a suspect Tuesday in connection with Sweden's biggest art robbery, the theft last month of works by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque. The 24-year-old man "is suspected of gross theft or involvement in gross theft," said prosecutor Sven-Erik Alhem. The missing eight paintings and a sculpture by Picasso have not been found, he said. The man's identity was withheld in line with Swedish press regulations. The theft has been compared with the 1974 film, *Rift*, by director Jule Dassin, because the thieves through the roof of the building. Museum officials said the stolen works are worth about 500 million kronor (\$60 million) but virtually impossible to sell since they are so well-known.

Woman cannot be forced to have Caesarean — judge

CHICAGO, Illinois (AP) — A second court has ruled that a woman cannot be forced to have a caesarean section although doctors say a natural birth might kill the baby. The mother, 22, is a Pentecostal Christian and says the operation would be against her beliefs. God will protect her child with a miracle, she said. The Illinois Appeals Court upheld a lower court's earlier refusal to make the woman have the operation. The lawyer representing the fetus said he would appeal to the state's Supreme Court. But doctors say the fetus, two weeks from full term, is not getting enough oxygen and will die or suffer severe brain damage if not taken from the womb. A Chicago hospital originally asked the court to order the woman to have a C-section after she refused to undergo the operation.

Robbers to bank: Thanks and Merry Christmas

MANILA (AP) — Eight armed robbers, two of them women, held up a branch bank and fled after wishing the terrified customers and employees a Merry Christmas. Four of the gang, including the women, entered a branch of BPI Family Bank and ordered those inside to lie on the floor while one of them cleared out the vault. "Many thanks at Christmas time," one of the women said as they fled, according to customer Maria Napes. Outside, four accomplices flagged down a car, forced the driver out and they all fled. The car was found about one kilometre (half a mile) away. Bank officials refused to say how much was taken. They also turned away policemen who went to the bank minutes after the robbery, police said. "People are thinking we are sleeping on the job," said the Makati district police chief, Superintendent Remy Macaspac. "But robbery victims are not cooperating with us." Many robberies and kidnappings in Manila have been blamed on off-duty or former policemen and soldiers.

Tiepolo painting stolen from Venice church

VENICE (AP) — Thieves who apparently hid overnight in a Venetian church made off with a painting by Giovanni Battista Tiepolo valued at \$1.25 million, authorities reported. The painting, on canvas, depicts the Virgin Mary and her mother, St. Anne, called Education Of A Virgin. It is an early work by Tiepolo, who lived from 1696 to 1770. Italy's rich heritage of art is plagued by thefts, and the stealing of the Tiepolo work from the 18th-century church, Santa Maria Della Fava (also known as Holy Mary of Consolation), was a classic illustration of why theft is chronic. With churches decorated by art treasures on practically every corner in Italian cities and towns, most parishes can't afford alarms or guards. At Santa Maria Della Fava, priests arriving to say morning mass Tuesday discovered the theft. Since no doors were forced, authorities suspect the thieves hid in the church at closing time. They used the ladder priests climb to decorate the altar and cut the painting from its frame. Authorities suspect the theft was done on commission since other artworks were untouched. The church's rector, Father Gilberto Silvestri, told the Italian News Agency (AGI) that last week thieves at the church stole a minor artwork. "It was probably a dry run, the thieves wanting to check if there were alarm systems, which unfortunately were lacking as in almost all Venetian churches," the priest said.

Actress Myrna Loy dies at 88

NEW YORK (R) — Actress Myrna Loy, "the queen of Hollywood" whose career spanned the history of movies and took her from exotic vamps to "perfect wife," died Tuesday in New York after a long illness, she was 88.

Lenox Hill Hospital spokeswoman Pat Sumers said Ms. Loy died early Tuesday evening. She could not comment on the nature of the illness.

Ms. Loy, who first appeared in silent films, made 124 movies in 60 years, including *The Thin Man* series with costar William Powell and other sophisticated comedies and dramas. She also appeared on Broadway and television.

Robert Mitchum, with whom she co-starred in *The*

Red Pony (1949), once said of Ms. Loy, "she knew what made a heroine, and what makes a queen."

Ms. Loy also worked for the Red Cross, the United Nations and backed a variety of social causes, including civil rights.

"I've managed to stay out of jail so far, but I prefer to do things that have a little bite," she once said.

Ms. Loy was born Myrna Williams in Helena, Montana, the daughter of a cattle rancher who died when Ms. Loy was 13. She moved with her mother to Los Angeles, where she studied art at Venice High School.

She was spotted by silent screen legend Rudolph Valentino as she danced in the chor-

us at Grauman's Chinese Theatre.

Ms. Loy first gained serious attention as Leslie Howard's wife in *The Animal Kingdom* (1932). The MGM Studio decided to make Loy a star, casting her in 1933 as a young writer in *When Ladies Meet* and a good-hearted prostitute in *Penthouse*.

That same year, she played her first "good wife" role in *Night Flight*, which also launched a pairing with Clark Gable.

In a newspaper poll, Ms. Loy and Gable were declared the "king and queen of Hollywood," but Ms. Loy's name would be more closely linked with Powell, her on-screen husband in 13 movies.

S. African province proclaims independence

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — The Orange Free State branch of the right-wing Conservative Party (CP) said Wednesday that the province was proclaiming itself an independent state prepared to defend itself with violence if necessary.

In a statement issued at the parliament here, CP provincial Chairman Abrie Oosthuizen said the decision was prompted by the findings of an opinion survey conducted among Free State whites by the CP and the umbrella Afrikaaner Volksfront (AVF).

A poll of 36,841 respondents chosen at random in the province's 55 districts and towns showed that 88.63 per cent want a "volkstaat" — a white homeland — compared to 11.37 per cent who were undecided or favour the ruling National Party (NP) or the African National Congress (ANC). Mr. Oosthuizen said.

According to a 1992 survey, the population of the province comprises 333,400 whites, 72,700 mixed race "colour eds" and 2,280,700 blacks.

"In the light of this information, the Free State Council of the CP can now declare that the entire province wants to be part of an Afrikaner free state," Mr. Oosthuizen said. "The Free State will therefore not be part of the NP-ANC unitary state."

"If (President) F.W. de Klerk or (ANC President) Nelson Mandela want the Free State to be part of the so-called New South Africa, they'll have to take (it) with violence," he said. "This therefore places the onus of violence on the NP and the ANC."

"In such an eventuality, we will defend the Free State with violence," he added.

Burmese army attacks drug warlord

BANGKOK (R) — Burmese troops attacked drug warlord Khun Sa's forces in a push to wipe out the thriving narcotics business on Burma's side of the Golden Triangle, Thai officials and sources close to Khun Sa said Wednesday.

Sources in Khun Sa's personal Mong Tai Army (MTA) said 100 Burmese soldiers and 20 of their own were killed in the fighting, which sent hundreds of Burmese villagers fleeing across the border into Thailand.

Thai police were skeptical of the number of Burmese dead. Thailand's national security chief, Charan Kulawanchit, told Reuters the attack was aimed at the drug business along Burma's northeastern border, one of the world's richest producers of opium, and arresting Khun Sa.

He said Khin Nyunt, powerful chief of Burma's Military Secret Service and secretary general of the military ruling body the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), had told him he wanted to settle the problem once and for all.

"I personally met Khin Nyunt last month and (he) told me that (he) wanted to get rid of the narcotic problems in the country and even wanted to arrest Khun Sa," Gen. Charan said.

They attack was launched just after Khun Sa, alias Chang Si-Fu, Tuesday declared an independent state of Shan with himself as president. Khun Sa said independence had been proclaimed by a local parliament over the weekend.

Khun Sa is the dominant leader in the poppy-growing area at the juncture of Laos, Thailand and Burma known as the Golden Triangle. It produces 70 per cent of the world's opium according to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) estimates. He was indicted by a U.S. court in early 1990 on various charges of heroin trafficking into the United States.

On Dec. 13, his Shan State Restoration Council set up a Shan parliament at his stronghold of Ho Mong about 20 kilometres from the Thai border.

The MTA source said heavy fighting broke out Tuesday morning when the MTA soldiers ambushed a column of about 1,000 Burmese soldiers who tried to cross the Salween River to Khun Sa-controlled areas in Shan state in north-eastern Burma.

China predicts 'chaos' in Hong Kong before 1997

HONG KONG (AFP) — China predicted "chaos" in Hong Kong before 1997 as Governor Chris Patten finally put his democratic reforms before the Legislative Council Wednesday, while financial markets yawned.

In a five-minute formality, Hong Kong's Secretary for Constitutional Affairs Michael

Sze urged legislators to give "early support" to the reforms that the governor first mooted 15 months ago.

"The proposals in this bill are part of our efforts to establish an open and fair electoral system which we believe to be acceptable to the people of Hong Kong," he said.

Asia may spend \$131b a year on arms by 1995

WELLINGTON (AFP) — The enormous scale of an arms buildup in Asia was causing concern in military circles here, the Ministry of Defence's Defence Quarterly magazine said Wednesday.

An article in the magazine said Asian nations will be spending 240 billion New Zealand dollars (\$131 billion) a year by 1995 on arms.

It added that by the end of the decade sea lanes linking New Zealand with some of its most important markets will be patrolled by 1800 new fighter and strike aircraft, three dozen new submarines and 200 new warships, the magazine says.

Defence Secretary Gerald Hensley told the magazine that the Asian countries were not competing in the purchase of arms, or trying to match each other's equipment. He said most countries were replacing 1960s era equipment.

"But concern remains nonetheless at the scale of the buildup, the swing in emphasis from defensive to offensive weapons systems — especially maritime patrol and strike capabilities — and deep uncertainties raised by the end of the cold war and U.S. decline (in presence)," the article said.

The magazine provides an "arms shopping list" for Asian and Pacific countries based on analyses by Professor Desmond Ball of the Defence Studies Centre of the Australian National University.

China plans perhaps 12 new Xia class nuclear submarines, each with 12 missiles capable of lobbing a two-megaton warhead 3,000 kilometres.

It is building new destroyers, missile frigates, assault and support ships and conventional submarines.

Its air force will get air-to-air refuelling, more heavy transports, interceptors, supersonic bombers and AWACS. Land forces will get more Russian-built T72 battle tanks.

Japan is introducing four new destroyers and new classes of frigates, submarines and ocean-going minehunters. Its maritime reach will be extended by tanker aircraft, up to 74 Orions and possibly light aircraft carriers.

India will get "eventually" a new aircraft carrier, new frigates, corvettes, tank landing ships and support vessels. It is replacing and expanding its conventional submarines and developing nuclear-powered ones.

It is planning long-range patrol aircraft, F-16S, air-to-air refuelling and new bases in South East Asia. It has agreed in principle to buy 80 European jet trainers.

Taiwan will gain a light aircraft carrier and up to 18 Harrier jets, and a 9,500-tonne helicopter carrier with advanced Seahawks. It has taken delivery of four frigates with two more to come, and three anti-submarine corvettes. It is considering a submarine fleet.

It is replacing obsolete ships with new American and French frigates.

North Korea has new MiG-29 and Sukhoi SU-25 fighters. Burma has obtained F-7M fighters from China, light attack aircraft from Yugoslavia and patrol boats, tanks and armoured personnel carriers.

South Korea is getting six new German submarines and up to 18 new destroyers. Indonesia is increasing its submarines from three to five and has bought almost a third of the former East German fleet: 16 corvettes, 12 landing ships, two supply ships and nine minesweepers. It is buying two more Orions and may order MiG-29 fighters.

The navies of Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore are planning, collectively, more frigates, corvettes, missile boats and fast attack craft.

Australia has launched the first of its six Collins-class submarines to replace the ageing Oberons.

Malaysia is planning a submarine fleet of up to four boats and Singapore may follow. Malaysia has ordered 18 MiG-29Ms and eight F/A-18D fighters.

Throughout Asia, up to 600 warships will be fitted with anti-ship missiles such as Harpoon and Exocet. Thailand may buy Orion aircraft fitted with Harpoon.

Russia's ultra-nationalists are bad news for Japan

TOKYO (Agencies) — The shock electoral success of Russia's ultra-nationalists has sent shudders down Japanese backs and cast a dark shadow over the chances of resolving the long-running dispute over the Kuril Islands.

Japanese decision-makers have been stunned by Vladimir Zhirinovskiy head of the Liberal Democratic Party which harvested nearly a quarter of the vote in the legislative poll, far ahead of reformist President Boris Yeltsin's supporters.

The press Wednesday warned of uncertain times ahead in Japan's powerful neighbour to the northwest.

The business daily Nihon Keizai Shimbun said, "the biggest concern is the political instability that may stem from the ultra-nationalists," while the influential Asahi, in an editorial, told readers that Mr. Zhirinovskiy had been compared to another dangerous demagogue — Adolf Hitler.

Most newspapers gave full coverage of a radio interview that Mr. Zhirinovskiy gave North German Radio in Hamburg Tuesday, in which he threatened Germany and Japan with nuclear annihilation if they interfered in Russia's internal affairs.

"The Japanese already experienced Hiroshima and Nagasaki," he said. "Fifty years have gone by, and maybe they've already forgotten this. We will create new Hiroshimas and Nagasakis. I will not hesitate to deploy atomic weapons."

In an interview with Kyodo

News Agency Monday, Mr. Zhirinovskiy also scorned any settlement over four islands in the Kuril Chain, which the Soviet Union seized from Japan in the final days of World War II.

Moscow's refusal to hand the islands back has embittered relations ever since, blocking the signing of a formal peace treaty and causing Japan to refuse providing significant aid for the Russian economy.

Mr. Zhirinovskiy not only denied that the Kurils dispute even existed, he spelt out expansionist moves in the Sea of Okhotsk, between Russia and Japan.

"The Sea of Okhotsk is a Russian inland sea," he said. "Foreign fishing boats should not intrude, so that the marine products can be used to improve Russian life."

A Japanese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wednesday played down the significance of these remarks.

"It is a known fact that Mr. Zhirinovskiy has been a hard-liner," the spokesman said. "First of all, he is a private person, not a public figure. We are not in a situation to be able to make comments right now."

But other government sources said that the nationalist surge would make it far harder now for Mr. Yeltsin to resolve the Kuril problem, as any apparent concession would expose him to withering fire in parliament.

Mr. Yeltsin visited Tokyo just two months ago, and issued a promise — leavened with prudence — that the 48-year-old quarrel would be set-

tled. "We have to resolve the Kuril question, but that is not possible today," he said. "It will take time."

The United States will only go so far in dealing with Zhirinovskiy. No matter what, President Bill Clinton says, he can't have Alaska back.

The 47-year-old lawyer who once threatened to drop "100 (nuclear) bombs" on any country that makes territorial claims on Russia, has also demanded the return of Alaska, Finland, Poland and other former parts of the Czarist empire.

Mr. Clinton did not rule out meeting with Mr. Zhirinovskiy next month when he visits Moscow, saying Monday he had not discussed his upcoming trip with advisers since the election. Pausing for a moment, the president laughed and said, "I don't think any of us expect to be giving up Alaska any time soon."

Vice President Al Gore, in Moscow to lay the groundwork for Mr. Clinton's trip, may invite Mr. Zhirinovskiy to a reception with other Russian political leaders, aides say.

Saying he was looking forward to the reception, Mr. Gore joked, "Zhirinovskiy may come to talk about Alaska."

Alaska, separated from Asia by the Bering Strait, was bought from Russia in 1867. It became a state in 1959.

Mr. Zhirinovskiy's positions are not compatible with those of the United States, Secretary of State Warren Christopher said Tuesday.

UEFA opts for 8 groups in European qualifiers

GENEVA (R) — Countries taking part in the 1996 European Championship face a marathon qualifying programme of 10 matches to reach the finals in England.

UEFA, faced with a record entry of 47 countries, said Wednesday it was planning to opt for eight groups, six of six teams each and two of five.

They will play each other home and away in a round-robin competition with the top two in each section qualifying for the finals.

The only exception will be for the two runners-up in the groups of five, who must play off against each other for the last place.

England as hosts get an automatic bye into the finals but, unlike in the World Cup, champions Denmark will have to go into the qualifying competition.

Denmark won the 1992 finals even though they failed to qualify, coming in only as last-minute replacements for Yugoslavia following a United Nations ban on sporting contacts.

Yugoslavia, still under the ban, is the only UEFA member not taking part in the championship which means that only Liechtenstein has decided to enter a major international competition for the first time.

Other first-time entrants include the new nations which have emerged from the breakup of Eastern Europe — Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Croatia, Belarus, Moldova, Slovenia and Slovakia.

But UEFA has said that the first four might have to play their home matches on neutral ground if war persists on their territory.

The draw for the qualifying competition takes place in Manchester on Jan. 22.

The proposals of the competition's organising commission for the draw will be placed before UEFA the previous day.

It has suggested grouping teams in six pools, according to playing strength, for the draw. The pools will be decided on the basis of results from the qualifying competition for the 1992 European Championship and 1994 World Cup.

Nations which did not take part in those tournaments will be assessed on results of their teams in European club competitions.

On that basis, Germany, France, Russia, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Italy and Ireland could expect to be top seeds for the qualifiers.

Al Ahli tops basketball chart with 3-point lead

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The eight competing teams in the first division basketball championship Thursday clash in a set of matches which are unlikely to change the current standing or affect their overall positions.

In what may prove to be the most competitive match of the day, sixth-placed Al Hussein take on third-placed Al Jazireh. Al Hussein, who lost 113-61 to titleholders Al Ahli last week, are expected to give it all they've got as they prepare for their clash against Al Watani to retake their usual fifth place. Al Watani are now fifth after their first-round 80-78 win over Al Hussein in double overtime.

In another heated match, the two newcomers Al Ashrafieh and Al Wifaq will fight it out for 7th and 8th places. Both teams are set to be relegated after failing to score a minimum number of wins.

Al Ashrafieh had won their first round clash 54-43. Al Wifaq have so far lost all their matches, the latest being their 94-29 loss to Al Jazireh.

In another match, Al Jalil who lost third place to Al Jazireh, will face the only unbeaten team — Al Ahli.

In their latest match Al Jalil surprisingly lost 83-80 to Al Watani in a match which went into overtime after a 76-76 draw.

Al Jalil, who had easily won their first round encounter 83-68 had a clear 26-18 lead at the outset of the match and ended the first half 32-28. However Al Watani managed to catch up and both teams drew three times before the match went into overtime. Al Jalil lost the match due to lack of concentration and inaccurate shots which enabled Al Watani to convert, score and lead 83-78 before sealing their 3-point precious win.

Al Watani will next take on former champions Al Orthodoxi at the Sports Palace Court in Amman.

Al Orthodoxi's only loss was 70-60 to Al Ahli in the first round final. They have easily overcome all their opponents and lately defeated Al Ashrafieh 121-38.

Standings

Team	P	W	L	SF	SA	Pts.
Al Ahli	11	11	-	1125	501	22
Al Orthodoxi	10	9	1	968	633	19
Al Jazireh	11	8	3	894	748	19
Al Jalil	11	6	5	888	713	17
Al Watani	11	5	6	738	857	16
Al Hussein	11	3	8	787	885	14
Al Ashrafieh	11	1	10	523	1068	12
Al Wifaq	10	-	10	404	922	10

* Al Orthodoxi and Al Wifaq have a postponed match.

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Faisali continues unbeaten record

By Aileen Bannayan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — There are 11 matches to go before soccer's first division competition concludes its preliminary round. This week, Al Ramtha meet second-placed Al Ahli while the two former champions, Al Wihdat, Al Faisali, clash in the most awaited match of the season.

Titleholders Al Faisali remained at the top of the standings this week after a 4-1 win over Sahab. They are the only team with an unbeaten record so far and have the best goal record 22-4 (see table).

Although Al Faisali have won the title in seven of the past 13 seasons, their next match will not be an easy encounter, as they face the star-studded Al Wihdat who have won the title three times since 1980.

Al Wihdat remained in fourth position this week after they drew 1-1 with third-placed Al Hussein.

Firas Fawzi gave Al Wihdat the lead by a header in the 17th minute while teammates Ibrahim Sa'adiyeh, Hisham Abdul Mun'em (back after a reduced suspension) and Abdullah Abu Zameh went on an early offensive.

Aref Hussein tried to score for his team and succeeded in gaining the equaliser in the 69th minute.

Al Hussein will next face 5th placed Al Arabi.

Al Ahli firmly held on to second place and proved they were a team to be reckoned with when they continued their winning spree by defeating Al Arabi 2-1.

Mousa Shiteyan gave Al Ahli an early lead when he scored the first goal in the 7th minute. Nart Yaday lost a definite chance before confirming their win when he added the second

goal in the 43rd minute.

Al Arabi's goal came from a penalty shot by Zakarya Al Momani in the 75th minute.

Al Yarmouk scored a precious 2-1 victory over the unpredictable Al Jazireh who took the lead thanks to a defensive error by Al Yarmouk's Khader Eid.

Mohammad Abu Taleb soon scored the equaliser in the 11th minute. He went on to score Al Yarmouk's winning goal in the 76th minute as Al Jazireh dropped to 7th place.

Meanwhile, Al Ramtha, who have five postponed matches, advanced to 6th place with a 1-0 win over newcomers Al Fuheis.

Al Ramtha made up for all the lost chances when Husam Al Dardour netted in the only goal in the 33rd minute.

Al Fuheis lost at least two scoring chances and failed to score an equaliser.

In another match, Al Qadissieh failed to advance their standing after 1-1 draw with lowly Al Baqaa.

Although Al Qadissieh took the lead from a goal by Amjad Taher, Suifan Jarwan scored his team's precious equaliser in the 62nd minute.

Al Qadissieh remained in 9th place followed by Al Baqaa.

Al Wihdat appeal to JSF

Al Wihdat this week sent a formal letter of appeal to the Jordan Soccer Federation (JSF) requesting them to review their latest decision of considering Al Wihdat's 3-0 win over Al Baqaa invalid and altering the result of the match to the latter's advantage which resulted in Al Wihdat's losing of its top ranking in the standings.

The JSF's decision was based on the fact that Al Wihdat's Abdullah Abu Zameh had joined his team in the

disputed match although he had three suspensions. They ruled by Item II of Article 3 that team officials should keep a record of players' suspensions and that the JSF is not responsible for notifying the clubs.

Al Wihdat's letter, addressed to the JSF President, his Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ibn Al Hussein, was drawn up by the club's legal advisors and attorney and based the appeal on the following points:

— The fourth referee of the match, responsible for registering suspensions, was absent during the disputed match. Therefore we could not clearly verify suspensions following the match, and Article 20 of the JSF rules cannot be made applicable here.

— According to Item 3 of Article 12, the fourth referee is responsible for filling out a form stating the cases of suspensions and bookings. There was no fourth referee in this match.

— The JSF is the body which imposes fines and rulings after it receives the necessary information and recommendation from the referee's committee. It is therefore logical that no ruling can be made until the

referees have filed a report of a particular match. However, in this case, the referee presented his report on Nov. 23 and accordingly the ruling should be applied from that day forward and not before. The disputed match was on Nov. 4.

— Al Wihdat took heed of all JSF rulings, and after having been notified of the JSF ruling on Nov. 23 Abdullah Abu Zameh was not allowed to join his team's upcoming match. Therefore the JSF ruling was applied and the player punished.

— Al Wihdat applied the JSF ruling by suspending the aforementioned player in one game. It is therefore unfair to apply a second punishment, altering the result of the match for Al Baqaa's advantage, as the club will have been castigated twice for the same offence.

— The club therefore requests the JSF to carefully look into all the aforementioned points, and hopefully form a fact-finding committee to deal with this case.

The JSF has upheld its decision and rejected any appeal. Al Wihdat are expected to take the matter to Prince Abdullah and the minister of youth.

Standings after 10th week

Team	P	W	GD	D	L	GF	GA	Pts.
Faisali	9	7	1	1	-	22	4	24
Ahli	10	5	-	3	2	17	9	21
Hussein	10	4	2	3	1	11	5	20
Wihdat	10	4	2	2	2	9	7	18
Arabi	10	3	-	3	4	13	16	15
Ramtha	6	4	-	1	1	10	4	14
Jazireh	9	2	-	3	4	12	13	12
Fuheis	9	3	1	1	4	7	12	12
Qadissieh	10	1	2	3	4	7	11	11
Baqaa	9	2	1	1	5	6	14	9
Yarmouk	8	3	-	-	5	7	16	9
Sahab	10	1	1	1	7	8	18	6

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ANSWERS TO WEEKLY BRIDGE QUIZ

Q.1—Both vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠KJ ♣84 ♠AKJ1054 ♠885
Partner opens the bidding with a 22-24 point two no trump. What do you respond?

A.—This is not a matter of points as much as how many aces partner holds. We would jump to four clubs, the Gerber Convention asking for aces. If partner shows three, we would contract for a grand slam in no trump; if only two, a small slam. Neither rates to depend on anything more than running the diamond suit and both could be laydown.

Q.2—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠KJ65 ♣AJ ♠876 ♠A1062
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
2 NT Pass ?

What do you bid now?
A.—Partner has shown a balanced hand of no more than 15 points, so you are not interested in more than game. With your balanced hand there is no reason why you should look for a minor-suit game and possibly derail the auction by jumping to three clubs. Bid three no trump.

Q.3—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠KJ6 ♣K4 ♠AQ10652 ♠84
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
2 NT Pass ?

What do you bid now?
A.—With your essentially balanced 13 points, this hand is well suited to play game in no trump. If you play that a jump to two no trump would be a game force, bid it. However, in modern methods that would be only invitational, so you would have to jump to three no trump.

Q.4—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠AQJ3 ♣J762 ♠9 ♠KQJ6
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 1 ♠ Pass
2 ?

What do you bid now?
A.—You have located at least an eight-card fit, so there's no point to introducing your spade suit. It's simply a question of whether to raise to two hearts or three, and we feel the hand is just too good for the former. Make an invitational jump to three hearts.

Q.5—As South, vulnerable, you hold:
♠K10873 ♣A74 ♠65 ♠AQ6
The bidding has proceeded:
South West North East
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass
2 ?

What do you bid now?
A.—Obviously, the question is whether you should rebid spades or raise partner's suit. The club response has improved our hand and, since we have suppressing such excellent support for what could be our best fit, we opt for the raise to three clubs.

Q.6—Neither vulnerable, as South you hold:
♠543 ♣KJ ♠KQ872 ♠K5
The bidding has proceeded:
North East South West
1 ♠ Pass 2 ♠ Pass
2 NT Pass ?

What action do you take?
A.—The one bid to rule out is three diamonds—that would show a sub-minimum two-over-one response with little more than a good diamond suit. We feel it's close between three no trump and three spades, but with our three-card support and slightly unbalanced hand we prefer three spades.

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Kim Basinger — in
Two Hot To Handle
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NEWS IN BRIEF

At least 70 feared dead in Cairo disaster

CAIRO (AFP) — At least 70 people are feared dead in the rockslide which engulfed a poor district of the Egyptian capital but a survivor was dug out a day after the disaster, rescue workers said Wednesday. The said 34 bodies had been found and that another 30 to 40 people were believed to have been buried when boulders from the Mikattam cliffs in eastern Cairo crashed onto the Dweqa shantytown. But residents of heavily-populated Dweqa, home mostly to the "Zebbalin" who collect and recycle the garbage of Cairo, (see page 2), said they feared the death toll was in the hundreds.

Hamas denies meeting Israeli military

GAZA CITY, Occupied Gaza Strip (AFP) — The Islamic Resistance Movement Hamas has strongly denied that its officials had held talks last week with the Israeli military commander for the occupied Gaza Strip, General Doron Almog. A statement published here said no meeting had taken place between Hamas leaders and Gen. Almog. Gen. Almog said Monday he had met Hamas leaders, whom he did not identify, who told him they preferred the Israeli occupation to autonomy because they feared an administration under Yasser Arafat. But Hamas insisted late Tuesday that Gen. Almog's account had no basis in reality and "was completely contrary to the principles of our movement".

Peres arrives in Paris to promote book

PARIS (AFP) — Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres arrived here on Wednesday for a two-day private visit during which he will promote the French translation of his book, "The New Middle East." Mr. Peres, who will also meet President Francois Mitterrand and Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, recounts the story of the secret negotiations that led to the Oslo agreement last August for Palestinian autonomy. Former Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon was also visiting France to raise funds for Jewish settlements on the occupied West Bank. In an interview with the right-wing daily Figaro published Wednesday, Mr. Sharon was critical of the autonomy accord, saying Israel should have negotiated with Jordan, which he claimed was "the true Palestinian state."

Iran leader confers with rejectionist camp

DAMASCUS (AP) — Only days after Syria pledged to return to the negotiating table with Israel, Iranian Vice-President Hassan Habibi held marathon meetings here with hardline groups opposed to the peace process. Mr. Habibi met into the early hours of Wednesday morning with members of Iranian-backed Lebanese Hizbollah and Palestinian factions violently opposed to peace with Israel. Despite its commitment to making peace with Israel, Syria has said it would not rein in the guerrillas in South Lebanon until Israel commits itself to a withdrawal from Syrian and Lebanese territories. Iran's state news agency said Mr. Habibi "underscored the importance of unity and solidarity among Muslim nations as a key to the liberation of Palestine and expulsion of the Zionist usurpers."

Former Djibouti government leader released

DIJIBOUTI (AFP) — A former government leader in Djibouti and 13 people jailed with him on charges of staging a coup attempt were released Wednesday, officials here said. Ali Aref Bourhan and the 13 other prisoners arrested in January 1991 and sentenced a year later to up to 10 years in prison were pardoned by President Hassan Gouled Aptidon who dismissed all charges against them. Their release comes two weeks after the Djibouti government and the rebel Front for the Restoration of Unity and Democracy (FRUD) exchanged prisoners of war.

Bomb hoax holds up Swissair flight

LARNACA (AFP) — A bomb hoax Wednesday delayed the departure of a Swissair flight from Larnaca to Zurich by seven hours, the airline said. An anonymous caller said a bomb had been planted on board the DC-9, just 10 minutes before take-off. The 94 passengers and six crew were evacuated and the plane was isolated at the end of a runway. But a police search found nothing and the Swiss plane left seven hours late. The search was only launched four hours after the initial take-off time, as a security measure to correspond with the length of the Larnaca-Zurich flight.

Iranian rebels' bus comes under attack

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A bus filled with members of the Iranian opposition Mujahadeen-e-Khalq came under a rocket attack Wednesday in the Iraqi capital, but there were no casualties, the Mujahadeen said. Charging Iranian diplomats were behind the attack in the Edrisi district, it said. Two rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs) were fired at the bus, which was carrying 50 members of the armed opposition group. The RPGs missed the target and instead damaged a pedestrian bridge and a wall of Baghdad's Rassafi scientific club, said the group. Iraqi police seized rocket launchers and other equipment left behind at the scene of the attack, carried out from a canal on the side of an expressway, it said.

U.N. aid ban to stay until Afghan fighting stops

KABUL (AFP) — The United Nations will not renew food assistance to Kabul until the warring factions cease hostilities, Sotirios Mousouris, U.N. special envoy, said here Wednesday. "It is not logical to continue sending convoys... under continuous bombardment by the warring factions," said Mr. Mousouris who flew in on a brief visit. The food supply was halted last month amid bombing and looting of trucks destined for Kabul.

Pan Am seeks \$300 million from Libya

EDINBURGH (R) — Pan American World Airways is seeking \$300 million in damages from Libya for allegedly blowing one of its jumbo jets out of the sky over Scotland in 1988 with the loss of 270 lives, Scottish lawyers said on Wednesday. No date has been set for hearing the action in Scotland's highest civil court, the court of session in Edinburgh. The Pan Am Move comes only six days before the five-year time limit for claims expires under Scottish law.

Police inspector shot overnight in Istanbul

ISTANBUL (AFP) — A police inspector involved in the Turkish government's campaign to crush the separatist Kurdish rebellion was shot to death overnight, officials said Wednesday. They said Inspector Mustafa Kirici was travelling on a highway that links Istanbul with the city of Kocaeli, where he is stationed, when two assailants in a jeep shot him to death and fled. Their vehicle had licence plates from the Netherlands. Officials said no one has claimed responsibility for the shooting.

Ireland to get Israeli embassy, PLO office

DUBLIN (AP) — The Irish government granted permission Tuesday for an Israeli embassy and a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) office in Dublin. Foreign Affairs Minister Dick Spring said Ireland was giving its full backing to the Middle East peace process. "Irish companies are now better placed to develop business ties with Israel and with the Palestinians by helping in the reconstruction of the occupied territories," Mr. Spring said. Ireland is one of the last European countries to allow an Israeli embassy. Israeli interests had been covered by the embassy in London. The country's Jewish community of 1,200 has been campaigning for years to allow an embassy in Dublin. But relations between the two countries have been tense because of incidents in southern Lebanon where 700 Irish U.N. forces have clashed with Israeli-backed militia. Also, Ireland has long been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause. In 1980, Ireland became the first European Community country to recognise the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians.

West's pullout from Somalia gains pace

MOGADISHU (R) — A Western pullout from U.N. forces in Somalia gathered momentum Wednesday with U.S., French, Belgian and Swedish contingents on their way out of the 29-nation alliance.

In sandbagged posts on Mogadishu's "green line" splitting the shattered city, Pakistani troops left behind pondered whether they would be able to stay on if a new civil war broke out.

Their concern was increased by word that Italy, the former colonial power in Somalia, and Germany announced Tuesday their forces would join the exodus of powerful Western units and be out by the end of the U.S. troop withdrawal on March 31.

"We believe this can only be settled by the Somalis," said a soldier in a shell-blasted building between the frontlines of powerful warlord Mohammed Farah Aided's forces and those of his foe Ali Mahdi Mohammed.

"If we remain stuck in the middle with Ali Mahdi wanting us out and Aided wanting us out and there is fighting we may have to leave like the Americans," he said. "I can't see how we can stay alone."

"I saw soldiers killed and then stripped of their uniforms and their bodies mutilated and stabbed with knives by Somalis. We, like them, are Muslims. But no religion can allow that."

The nearly 5,000-strong Pakistani contingent has the top killed-in-action toll of all U.N. forces in Somalia — 32 dead. The Americans, who led "Operation Restore Hope" a year ago, are in second place with 29 combat deaths and 130 wounded.

In the southern Somali port city of Kismayu, the 950-man Belgian contingent handed over its seaside headquarters to Indian troops in a ceremony attended by retired U.S. Admiral Jonathan Howe, the

U.N. special representative to Somalia.

The last Belgians will leave the Horn of Africa country, where a famine fuelled by civil war from January 1991 killed 300,000 people before the U.N. intervened, by Dec. 26.

Kismayu is seen by U.N. commanders as a possible flashpoint for renewed civil war. The 5,000 Indians taking over a much larger swathe of the south expect to be tested again after a post 100 kilometres to the northwest was hit on Tuesday.

A spokesman for the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) said the first 280 French were leaving Mogadishu on Wednesday in addition to a ship loaded with their equipment.

One hundred members of the 1,075 French force will remain in Somalia to train Somali policemen in the town of Baldo as part of UNOSOM's new strategy of "Somali solutions for Somali problems" provoked by its failure to curb militia rivalries.

U.S. President Bill Clinton prompted the wave of Western pullouts when he announced in October after four months of conflict with General Aided's men and the failure of a man-hunt for him that all U.S. forces would leave by the end of next March.

U.N. commanders warn of an upsurge in banditry as the alliance dwindled spurred by the collapse of what mediators billed as last chance peace talks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, last Saturday.

U.S. troops shot at a Somali riding on top of a bus with a light machinegun in Mogadishu on Tuesday night, a U.S. military spokesman said. The man was hit in the leg but fled.

Aid agencies and most Somali businessmen employ armed guards to protect their vehicles including buses against looting by gunmen in the still lawless and gun-filled capital.

Kuwaiti convicted of murder in Farhat case

KUWAIT (AP) — A court Wednesday convicted a Kuwaiti policeman of murdering a Lebanese man and his son shortly after liberation from Iraqi occupation, and sentenced him to life in prison.

The case of the murder of Ismail Farhat and his son Osama drew world attention as a measure of how far Kuwait was willing to punish its own people for revenge attacks after the 1991 Gulf war.

The policeman, Jaber Al Ameer, also was convicted of the attempted murder of Osama's sister Naimat, whose right arm and leg were left paralysed by the attack.

The court ordered Mr. Ameer to pay compensation of 5,001 dinars (\$17,503) to Ms. Farhat. But it acquitted the 33-year-old policeman of raping the woman, who now lives in Santa Cruz, California, with her brother.

Judge Yousef Jankiah read the sentence after listening to closing statements from Mr. Ameer's and the Farhat's lawyers.

Mr. Ameer attended the session but was not in court when the sentence was read about two hours later.

The court found Mr. Ameer guilty of murdering the two men after he stormed their apartment in Salwa district March 2, 1991, days after Iraqi troops were forced out of the emirate.

Ms. Farhat's lawyer Mohammad Al Inzi said the sentence was "adequate." The policeman's lawyer was not immediately available for comment.

Mr. Ameer, who denied all charges, was injured in a car accident after the attack on the Farhats and was left partially paralysed.

He could have faced a death sentence for the double murder and the third, attempted murder.

Aziz Abu Hamad, associate director of the New York-based human rights group Middle East Watch, attended

Wednesday's session.

"Although I'm against death sentences... it is justified to say that the nationality of the defendant played a significant role in the sentence," Mr. Abu Hamad said.

"The person who was convicted was a Kuwaiti government official at the time he committed the crime, and that could have played a role in imposing the lesser sentence."

Mr. Abu Hamad said Kuwaiti state security courts have given convicted collaborators with Iraqi occupiers much more severe sentences.

Death sentences were handed down in 1991 to 29 "collaborators," mostly Iraqis and Palestinians. They were committed to life imprisonment after criticism from human-rights organisations.

About 250 convicted collaborators currently are serving prison sentences.

The Farhats denied collaborating and were not charged with it.

Ms. Farhat said her attacker, armed with a rifle bearing a Kuwait flag sticker on the stock, told her he had orders to execute the family for "collaborating with Iraqi occupiers."

She said she did not believe her attacker acted alone and she wanted those who "gave him the orders" to come to justice.

Khaled Al Ngaimishi, Mr. Ameer's lawyer, said in his closing statement his client was framed because of pressure from the West.

"The prosecution stopped active investigation in the case twice," he told the judges. "But when we were pressured from the West... we seemed to have found a defendant... justice cannot be imported from the West."

Abu Hamad said the proceedings were adequate and the court gave the victim's representative sufficient time. He thought the defence was "brilliant," taking into consideration the "watertight" case against Mr. Ameer.

Informant said he built World Trade Centre bomb

NEW YORK (R) — The government informant in the alleged conspiracy to blow up New York City landmarks has said that he built the deadly bomb detonated last February at the World Trade Centre, tape transcripts show.

The tapes were secretly recorded by the informant, former Egyptian army officer Enad Salem, during his conversations with Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Agent John Anticev.

Speaking with the agent about his expenses last April, Mr.

Salem defends the costs by saying that they were pushed higher by the building of the trade centre bomb.

Told that his expenses had been "a little out of the ordinary," he replies in broken English: "I don't think that because we was start already building the bomb, which is went off in the World Trade Centre."

He says that the bomb was built "by supervision from the bureau (FBI) and the D.A. (district attorney)."

"We know that the bomb



GAZA VICTIM: Palestinians carry the body of Husam Mohammad Bakri, who was shot dead by Israeli soldiers during clashes Wednesday at the Sheikh Radwan cemetery in the Gaza Strip (AFP photo)

Released Westerners arrive from Baghdad en route home

By Mariam M. Shabin
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

MARKA — The last two known western prisoners in Iraq flew to Amman Wednesday, one day after they were released from the Abu Girsib prison in Baghdad upon the orders of President Saddam Hussein.

The two, German Kai Sondermann, 28 and French Jean-Luc Barriere, 25, were handed over to German troubleshooter Hans-Juergen Wischniewski and French Gaullist official Serge Bordevals respectively.

The two European officials met with Iraqi officials and Mr. Wischniewski drove to the central Iraqi city of Tikrit to meet and personally thank Iraqi President Saddam Hussein for the release of Mr. Sondermann who, Mr. Wischniewski said, was an innocent victim of the conflict and "not an enemy of Iraq."

"We drove to Tikrit where we met with the Iraqi president," said Mr. Wischniewski upon his arrival at the Marka airport aboard a Jordanian police helicopter from the border along with Mr. Sondermann and the head of the Middle East department of the German foreign ministry, Dr. Hermann Bartles, a former German ambassador to Jordan.

The release of Mr. Sondermann and Mr. Barriere came after last Friday's release of three Britons who flew out of Baghdad with former British Prime Minister Edward Heath.

Mr. Sondermann and Mr. Barriere were arrested in separate incidents at the Iraq-Kuwaiti border by Iraqi security men.

Mr. Sondermann, a law student at the University of Munster, was sentenced to eight years in prison on June 6. He was arrested on May 28.

"We are happy that a sentence of eight years turned into no more than 200 days," said Mr. Wischniewski.

"I was never mistreated, nor were any of the foreign prisoners," said Mr. Sondermann. "The Iraqi prisoners did not always have it so well, however," he added.

"We are just happy to have him back," said Mr. Sondermann's mother who flew to Amman with her husband on Monday to meet her son upon his arrival.

Mr. Wischniewski, a member of Germany's Social Democrats who delivered a letter to President Saddam from German Chancellor Helmut Kohl appealing for Mr. Sondermann's release, stressed that his mission to Baghdad was "purely humanitarian."

"We were not asked for any commitment in return for Mr. Sondermann's release,"

added Mr. Wischniewski. Commenting on his meeting with President Saddam, Mr. Wischniewski said Iraq reiterated its commitment for "full compliance with United Nations resolutions" on a condition that "they would not be humiliating."

He said the Iraqis explained to him the "worsening" conditions resulting from international sanctions imposed on Iraq after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"The average Iraqi citizen not to mention the sick people are suffering greatly from the prevailing conditions," he said. "We have good hope to find a quick solution to this problem."

Mr. Sondermann's and Barriere's releases were widely seen as part of Iraq's bid to lift the embargo.

Mr. Barriere was accompanied by French parliamentarian Roselyne Bachelot and Mr. Boidevaux, a French diplomat, who appealed his release with Iraqi authorities.

Looking healthy but tired, Mr. Barriere, an engineer with a French communications company in Kuwait, told reporters that he felt "great to be free again."

Expressing gratitude for the Iraqi leadership to set him free, he said the first thing he would do when he returns home, "is to toast the Iraqis."

U.N. to finance Gaza and Jericho Palestinian police training centres

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The United Nations has agreed to a Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) request to finance the establishment of police training centres in the occupied Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, U.N. and PLO officials said Wednesday.

They said Nasser Al Kidwa, the PLO observer at the U.N., met with Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali on Tuesday and handed over a formal request.

"The secretary-general said that the request would be considered within the context of the United Nations system's aid programme for the implementation of the (Israel-PLO) declaration of principles (of Sept. 13)," said a statement released by the Amman-based Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA).

"This programme, which had been presented to the secretary-general shortly after the signing of the declaration of principles, contained a list of projects proposed by different elements of the U.N. system," it said. "The police academy proposal would be included."

No figures were mentioned, but PLO officials

here said the police academy projects were expected to cost more than \$3 million.

The U.N., acting through its various agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, has announced plans to increase its spending in the occupied territories by 55 per cent to \$388 million in fiscal year 1994.

The increase is described by U.N. officials as the immediate response of the world body to support Middle East peace in the wake of the Israel-PLO accord.

Omar Khatib, deputy chief of mission at the Palestinian embassy in Amman, said Palestinian negotiators had discussed the police academy proposal with their Israeli counterparts during their discussions on implementing the Sept. 13 autonomy agreement.

He said the PLO wanted to set up one centre in Jericho and another in the Gaza Strip, noting that "it is not possible to have Palestinian police training facilities in areas which will remain under Israeli control in the interim period."

"We found it more feasible to have police training centres in the occupied territories

than to have our policemen train outside," Mr. Khatib told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Khatib was referring to a proposed 15,000-strong Palestinian police force that would deploy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho after Israeli withdrawals from the two areas in line with the Sept. 13 accord.

The deadline for the beginning of the withdrawal was missed on Monday after serious differences remained unresolved over the size of the area to be evacuated, control over crossings and security for Jewish settlements in the areas.

Upto 6,000 members of the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) are believed to have undergone training in Jordan, Egypt, Yemen, Iraq and Tunisia in basic police skills as the nucleus of the police force. Several dozens of them have also undergone intensive instructor's course so that they could train others, including up to 3,000 to 5,000 recruits from the occupied territories.

PLO sources said Israeli Police Minister Moshe Shahal, who attended a round of Israel-PLO negotiations three weeks ago, agreed to the request to set up police training centres in Gaza and Jericho immediately after the expected Israeli withdrawal.

COLUMN

Prince meets the paupers

LONDON (R) — Britain's Princess Diana has given her young son Prince William a glimpse of the harsher realities of life, taking him to meet homeless people at a London day centre, newspapers reported Wednesday. The 11-year-old prince, whom many clergymen would like to see as Britain's next monarch, visited the shelter near Westminster Cathedral with his mother and Cardinal Basil Hume, leader of Britain's Roman Catholics. Prince William is second in line to the throne after his 45-year-old father Prince Charles. Many clerics in Britain's official state Church of England have questioned Prince Charles' suitability to become king if he divorces his estranged wife Princess Diana, 32, and if allegations he was unfaithful to her with a married woman prove true. Some suggest he should step aside in favour of Prince William, the older of his two sons, when Queen Elizabeth, 67 and in fine health, dies or abdicates, which is unlikely at present. The newspapers said the fair-haired young prince met some of around 100 down-and-outs who visit the Catholic-run centre every day for warmth and a cheap lunch. "Clearly shy, he didn't say much. Instead he dutifully listened to what the homeless had to say and then shook hands," the left-leaning Daily Mirror reported.

Michael Jackson almost died, mother says

LOS ANGELES (R) — Michael Jackson's mother said she was told her superstar son almost died of his addiction to painkilling drugs. Katherine Jackson dropped the bombshell during an interview with a Los Angeles television station, Black Entertainment Television, as she and other members of the Jackson family were being interviewed. She said that on Nov. 12, when Jackson announced in Mexico City he was cancelling his world tour to promote his album, Dangerous, she talked to her son's representatives there. "They just told me how bad off he was. They told me they almost lost him," she said. Asked by the interviewer, "what did they mean by that he almost died?" Katherine Jackson replied, "I guess so." Jackson, who returned from Europe Friday after undergoing therapy for his admitted addiction to painkilling drugs, has been accused by a 13-year-old boy of sexual molestation. The multimillionaire entertainer has vehemently denied the accusation through his lawyers, but his brother Tito said on Tuesday night's television interview Michael would personally make a statement "when he is ready to give one." Meanwhile, the Los Angeles Times Tuesday reported that Jackson's former maid had told authorities that she saw him cavorting naked with young boys, and investigators are seeking another search of the pop star's Neverland valley estate.

France's oldest woman costs dear

MARSEILLE, France (AFP) — A solicitor who took out a life annuity on 90-year-old Jeanne Calment in 1965 in return for her apartment made a bad deal. At 117, she is France's oldest woman and thriving. Arles solicitor Andre-Francois Raffray, now retired, bought her apartment for a small sum and agreed to pay her 2,500 francs (\$425) a month until her death, when her home would become his. Ms. Calment, who will be 118 next Feb. 21, is living happily and healthy in an old people's home.

Second Russian Booker Prize for fiction awarded

MOSCOW (R) — Writer Vladimir Makanin has won the second annual £10,000 (\$15,000) Booker prize for Russian fiction for his novel A Balise-Covered Table With A Decanter In The Middle. The prize, an offshoot of the British Booker Prize, for fiction, is sponsored by Booker PLC, a British food manufacturing and trading company. Makanin was awarded the prize at a ceremony in Moscow Tuesday night. His novel portrays an insignificant individual face to face with an oppressive bureaucratic state — a traditional theme in Russian literature. The competition drew 38 entries, which were judged by a Russian-British jury.